

Italian
premier
plans to
ask Clinton
for support
for Kurds

Palestinian prisoners riot in Israeli jail, wound three policemen

MEGIDDO PRISON (AFP) — Palestinian prisoners rioted Monday at this jail in northern Israel, setting fire to their mattresses and smashing furniture in a protest against their detention, police sources said. Three policemen were slightly injured before the situation was brought under control. Under October's Wye River accord, Israel undertook to release 750 Palestinian prisoners, but so far only 250 have been freed. Of those, 150 were common criminals, provoking anger among Palestinians who expected political prisoners to be released. Several hundred Palestinians are held in the prison.

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PM issues circular on official pictures

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh has circulated instructions to all government departments that only pictures of the late King Hussein and His Majesty King Abdullah are to appear in ministries' offices, official departments and public institutions.

Former Japanese premier attacked

TOKYO (AP) — Former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone was attacked during a funeral at a temple in downtown Tokyo on Monday, but police seized the assailant before he could injure the politician. Shouting "traitor," the man approached and did manage to hit Nakasone before police overpowered him, the Kyodo News Agency said. The man, who was not armed, was identified as Takamitsu Tomikawa, 28 and unemployed, said an official at the Nakano police station, speaking on condition of anonymity. Kyodo said he was placed under arrest. His motives were not immediately known, police said.

Rwandan rebels kill 3, abduct 13

KAMPALA (AP) — Rwandan rebels raided several campgrounds in the jungles of southwestern Uganda, killing three people and abducting 13 foreign tourists who were tracking rare mountain gorillas, diplomatic and tourist sources said Monday. Britain's foreign office said it believed some of the tourists kidnapped late Sunday were British nationals, and there were unconfirmed reports that some were Americans. Seven of the abducted tourists, including a French diplomat, managed to escape.

Toddler killed by pit bull in California

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A 14-month-old boy died after being mauled by his family's pit bull dog in their back yard. Paramedics sent to the home on Sunday found that flesh had been ripped from the youngster's face, said fire department spokesman Brian Humphrey. The boy, whose name was not released, died later at a hospital. An 11-year-old neighbour heard the dog growling. "I saw that [the boy] was fighting off the dog and called for his parents but no one heard me, that's when I called my parents," Adrian Banuelos said. His father called paramedics. It was unclear what provoked the dog, and the family said it was the first time the animal had attacked anyone, said officer Joe Estrada. Animal control officers took custody of the dog.

Five dead from strep outbreak in Chicago area

AURORA (AP) — A deadly form of strep bacteria has infected 11 people in the Chicago area, killing five of them. The Illinois health department and the U.S. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention are investigating to find the source of the strep infections and learn whether the cases were related, officials said. The CDC says about 10,000 to 15,000 people in the United States develop the illness each year, and about 2,000 die. The most recent case, involving an elderly Aurora man, was diagnosed Friday. Kane County Medical Director David Lucks said Sunday.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي

Jordan, Israel to seek funding for joint Jordan Valley water projects

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — Jordanian and Israeli water officials met yesterday to put the finishing touches on a funding proposal for joint water projects in the Jordan Valley, a senior official said yesterday. Minister of Water and Irrigation Hani Mulki told the Jordan Times that documents on funding for a handful of water projects stipulated in the Kingdom's 1994 peace treaty with Israel had been prepared and would be reviewed by a technical committee in Tel Aviv for finalisation. "I expect that all details will be finalised by next week and sent to the EU for funding consideration," he said. The proposal will solicit funding for a wastewater treatment plant in the Jordan Valley and a desalination and conveyance system to provide Jordan with an additional 50 million cubic metres of drinking water annually, among other projects. The budget sought from the Europeans Union is approximately ECU400

million (\$356 million), part of which would be used for feasibility studies, said an official source. However, the source did not say whether Israel and Jordan had agreed on the source from which the additional 50 mcm of water should be extracted, other than it would be extracted from water resources in the Jordan Valley. The plan for the extraction of the 50 mcm should have been developed within one year of the enactment of the treaty, but has proven a thorn in the sides of both parties due to different interpretations of a sub-article of the treaty's water annex. The sub-article states that the two countries "shall cooperate in finding sources for the supply to Jordan of an additional quantity of 50 mcm of water a year to drinkable standards." Jordan has contended that Israel is obligated to provide the water, while Israel contends that it is only obligated to approach international donors to fund the project in cooperation with the Kingdom. No further details about

the proposal were available. The meeting followed the first talks held between His Majesty King Abdullah and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday, during which water and economic issues figured high on the agenda. Following his meeting with King Abdullah, Netanyahu told reporters to expect a series of meetings between Jordanian and Israeli officials "over the coming days." A senior Jordanian official said Minister of Trade and Industry Mohammed Saleh Hourani and his Israeli counterpart Nathan Sharansky are due to meet twice this month, once in the region to renew Jordan's trade accord with Israel and again in Washington to sign final agreements on the designation of two new areas as Qualifying Industrial Zones. The Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ), now limited to the Prince Hassan Industrial Estates in Irbid, is one of the headline economic cooperation projects between Jordan and Israel. By meeting certain

requirements specified by the United States, industrialists in the zone can export their products duty and quota free to the United States. Although the zone has caught the attention of only a handful of Jordanian investors, multinationals have been enthusiastic to invest. Some have even expressed an interest in shifting their production from lucrative duty free zones such as Jabal Al Ali in Dubai. Demand for space forced the expansion of the QIZ by 344 dunums in mid-1998. The expansion project should be completed by June 1999. The U.S. recently approved the designation of an additional 2,200 dunums near Mafrak and 500 dunums in the Jordan Valley south of the Sheikh Hussein border crossing point. The latter expansion is part of the Jordan Gateway Projects Company, a Jordanian-Dutch joint venture, and will be complemented by another 300 dunums on the Israeli side of the border in the initial stage of development.



His Majesty King Abdullah meets Monday with the Turkish army's deputy chief of staff, Brigadier General Hilmi Ozkok (Petra photo)

King meets with top Turkish general, Eritrean minister

AMMAN (IT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday met with the Turkish army's deputy chief of staff, Brigadier General Hilmi Ozkok, who delivered a message to the King from Turkish President Suleyman Demirel concerning bilateral ties and the status of the Middle East peace process. Ozkok visited the grave of the late King Hussein, where he

recited verses of the Holy Koran and placed a wreath of flowers. Also Monday, King Abdullah received Eritrean Tourism Minister Ahmed Haji Ali, who delivered a message to the King from the Eritrean president regarding his country's conflict with Ethiopia and briefed the King on efforts to end the hostilities.

Ali visited King Hussein's grave, where he recited verses of the Holy Koran. King Abdullah also received the chairman of Arab Radio and Television (ART), Sheikh Saleh Abdullah Kamel, who consoled the King over the passing away of King Hussein. Kamel also visited the grave of King Hussein and recited verses of the Holy Koran.



Iraqi pumping station employees Monday clear debris from Station 6 in northern Iraq 40 km west of Mosul. The station was reportedly attacked Sunday by American planes (AP photo)

One Iraqi reported killed in U.S. attack Iraqi oil exports still halved after air raid

Agencies

U.S. AIR force jets dropped more than 30 bombs on Iraqi military installations Monday in a second consecutive day of attacks, a U.S. military official said. U.S. F-15 fighters patrolling a no-fly zone over northern Iraq targeted Iraqi communication, radio relay and anti-aircraft artillery sites after being targeted several times by Iraqi radars, said Air Force Capt. Mike Blass of the U.S. European Command, overseeing the no-fly zone. "There was no damage to the aircraft," Blass said. "Damage to Iraqi forces is under assessment." The incidents happened in the vicinity of the city of Mosul, about 400 km north of Baghdad. The bombing in northern Iraq on Monday killed one person and injured nine among the local population, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported. "The enemy planes carried out two raids against a residential complex belonging to the [Iraqi] Northern Oil Company, where one citizen was killed and nine others injured," an Iraqi spokesman said, quoted by INA. Meanwhile, Iraqi oil exports were at less than half capacity

Monday as engineers assessed U.S. air strike damage to the control station of Iraq's pipeline to Turkey, an Iraqi ministry official said. "We are still assessing [the damage]," said Faleh Hassan Al Khayat, chief planning official at Iraq's oil ministry, as Washington acknowledged for the first time that U.S. warplanes may have damaged the pipeline during Sunday's air strike. "Pumping will start again in a few days," Talal Ashur, head of the Northern Oil Company, told AFP at the scene. But he said full repairs would take several weeks and cost \$750,000. The pipeline runs from Iraq's northern Kirkuk oilfield to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, carrying some 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd). Of Iraq's U.N.-authorised oil exports of 2.1 million bpd. An AFP photographer at the scene said debris from the station, used to inform the Turkish side of the amount of oil being pumped, was being cleared by workers Monday afternoon. Rubble, shards of aluminium and burst pipes were scattered around the installation in a desert zone some 65 kilometres north of the city of Mosul. In Ankara, officials at Turkey's Pipeline and Petroleum Transport Corporation confirmed that the pumping of oil had stopped.

"The pumping of oil in the pipeline has stopped because of a problem in the communications system," an official told the Turkish news agency Anadolu, adding that the damage was "minor." The station was hit on Sunday by U.S. warplanes which "inflicted severe damage," killed one worker and severely wounded two others, the Iraqi oil ministry said. Defence Secretary William Cohen acknowledged Monday that U.S. aircraft may have been responsible for putting the 1,200-kilometre pipeline out of action but insisted it had not been the aim of the U.S. action. "We did in fact target a communications facility which may or may not have interrupted the flow of oil temporarily going into Turkey," Cohen said at a Pentagon press conference. "But we believe that the target itself was one that was used for communications purposes for their military," he said. The U.S. military's European command released a statement Sunday reporting U.S. aircraft had launched three air-to-ground missiles and dropped three laser-guided bombs on Iraq earlier in the day. The bombardments were aimed at an Iraqi air defence headquarters and a radio relay site in northern Iraq, according to the statement.

Tension eases in south Lebanon as Israel abandons attack plan Hizbollah vows to continue operations

TYRE (R) — Tension eased in southern Lebanon on Monday after Israel appeared to call off plans to launch a massive military offensive to avenge the killing of four Israelis at the weekend. After fierce air and artillery assaults overnight, nervous southerners, fearing a repeat of Israel's bloody 1996 incursion into Lebanon, kept their children home from school. As the day wore and the attack never materialised, villagers ventured out and resumed their daily activities. "Last night we went to sleep scared but today we're more comfortable. We're not on alert any more," 65-year-old Um Yassin said from the frontline village of Kaf Rounman. Israel officials had vowed to carry out an air, ground and sea assault on positions of the Hizbollah guerrilla group but then appeared to tone down their comments on Monday, saying the army was ready to strike at the pro-Iranian group any time. Security sources said the Jewish state would not escalate the worst violence on last active Arab-Israeli front since

1996 unless the guerrillas fired rockets across the border. "Israel will continue the battle against Hizbollah because they continue the battle against us," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said after a three-hour security cabinet meeting. "I'm not going to get into operational steps but we have our plans well laid out and our targets well chosen." Teacher Ali Fawaz said most southern residents had been on tenterhooks for the Israeli cabinet decision. "Since we heard what Netanyahu had to say, the situation is much better. We're not as fearful as this morning," he said. In Beirut, Information Minister Anwar Khalil dismissed the possibility of a Hizbollah rocket attack and said Lebanon was optimistic that France and the United States would prevent Israel from conducting a fresh assault. "The response has been positive until now. We hope to have an answer later today. The final decision is in Israeli hands," he told a news conference. Israel raided positions of the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah in

north and south Lebanon five times on Sunday in retaliation for the deadly roadside bomb attack. Brigadier General Erez Gerstein, the highest ranking Israeli officer to die in Lebanon since Israel's 1982 invasion, was among the casualties. In the southern city of Tyre, Hizbollah said two fighters — 26-year-old Adnan Hassan and 23-year-old Hussein Mughrniya — were killed in the Israeli attacks. As the group mourned the death of its "martyrs," a senior Hizbollah official vowed to keep up the battle to end Israel's 21-year-old occupation of Lebanon. "We consider it our right to stage attacks against the Israelis. We cannot accept the occupation of our land. Nothing will stop us from carrying out operations to liberate it," the group's Deputy Secretary General Naeem Qassem told reporters. He said Israel would not wage a full-scale war against Lebanon for "political reasons" but said Hizbollah was ready for any onslaught. "I don't think that they want

to start an adventure that will be costly for them," the cleric added. Lebanese newspapers said they did not expect a large-scale offensive, particularly as the Jewish state faced general elections in May. "Every time an Israeli leader wants to feel strong or rally the Knesset or is facing elections... they beat the war drums at Lebanon," Al Safir said in an editorial. Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres launched a blitz on Lebanon in 1996 days before an election, only to lose to Netanyahu after Israeli Arabs refused to vote for him in a close-run race. Iran condemned the air strikes on Lebanon as a "criminal act," saying the Jewish state was the main cause of instability in the region. Tehran supplies Hizbollah with arms which are covertly passed on by Lebanon's powerful neighbour Syria. President Emile Lahoud discussed the tension in the south with his Syrian counterpart Hafez Assad, whose country maintains a firm grip on Lebanon's internal and external policy.

Hardliner threatens to nullify votes in Iran's elections

TEHRAN (AP) — A hardline chairman of an electoral supervision board threatened Monday to challenge the results of local polls in Tehran, where supporters of moderate President Mohammad Khatami appeared to have triumphed. With more than half the votes counted Monday, Khatami loyalists had won 12 of the 15 seats in Tehran, the focus of the struggle between hardliners and moderates in Iran's Islamic government. Independents won the other three seats in Friday's elections. "We will definitely nullify the votes of those candidates who were disqualified by us ahead of the polls and were illegally allowed to run by the interior ministry," Mohsen Yahyavi, the head of Tehran supervision board, told the Associated Press.

The board, which is dominated by hardliners, disqualified about 50 candidates, mostly moderates, before the elections. But Khatami ruled the disqualifications illegal and instructed the interior ministry, which ran the elections, to let the candidates stand. Several of the front-runners in the Tehran results, including the popular former Interior Minister Abdullah Nouri, were on the board's disqualified list. Asked whose victories he was going to challenge, Yahyavi said: "Don't ask me about any names. We follow the law and we will act." "We will reject the illegal candidates, even if their votes are very high," he added. No one quite knows whether the supervision board or the interior ministry will prevail in this dispute as the local elec-

tions were the first since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Both organisations claim to have the right to supervise the polls. Election officials had counted about 15 million votes, or 60 per cent of the ballots, by Monday, Tehran radio reported. The ministry says final results may not come before Friday, especially in larger cities like Tehran. In some towns and cities, the turnout was so high that polling stations ran out of ballots and voting hours had to be extended twice. About 330,000 candidates ran for some 200,000 seats on municipal councils in the election, the first such vote since the 1979 revolution. Some seats were unopposed. Women were front-runners in at least 20 cities, the results showed. Nearly all of them are supporters of Khatami, who has

encouraged women to play a bigger role in Iran's political life. Women have looked to Khatami, a moderate cleric, to improve their social standing. They were instrumental in Khatami's victory against a hardline rival in the May 1997 presidential election. Khatami supporters were ahead in 11 of Iran's 28 provinces, the moderate newspaper Akhbar reported Sunday. In Tehran, former minister Nouri, a well-known Khatami ally, received the largest number of votes, according to the results published in Iranian newspapers. Hardliners in the parliament forced Nouri from the interior ministry last year over his support for Khatami's policy of greater social, political and cultural freedom.

'Chained women' rally to press rabbis for divorce

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Bound by handcuffs and chains, 50 women rallied outside the offices of Israel's chief rabbis Monday to demand that Jewish religious authorities stop refusing them the right to divorce abusive or absent husbands.

"Free the prisoners of religious law," read posters carried by the women, known in Hebrew as agunot — or chained women.

Aliza Ben Ami has been an agunot for 11 years — the time her husband has refused to grant her a "get" or religious bill of divorce required by Jewish law.

Married at 20 and now 35, Ben-Ami said her husband was jailed eight months ago by a rabbinical court for bearing her and still refuses to give her a get.

Israeli women's organizations estimate there are up to 10,000 agunot in Israel, ranging from women whose husbands refused to grant them

divorces to cases where the husbands simply left or whose deaths cannot be proven.

Organisers of Monday's rally, including the Israel Women's Network and the International Coalition of Agunot, are demanding that rabbinical authorities allow marriage annulments and coerced divorce in cases where abusive men refuse to grant gets or husbands disappear.

They also say rabbis should recognise prenuptial agreements which would provide women with specific grounds for divorce.

"All these have precedents in [Jewish law] and would prevent or solve many of the cases in Israel today," said Elana Sztokman, a member of the Dead End Association which provide aid to agunot.

Rabbi Elihu Ben-Dahan, director of the rabbinical courts, said the situation of agunot has improved greatly since the power two

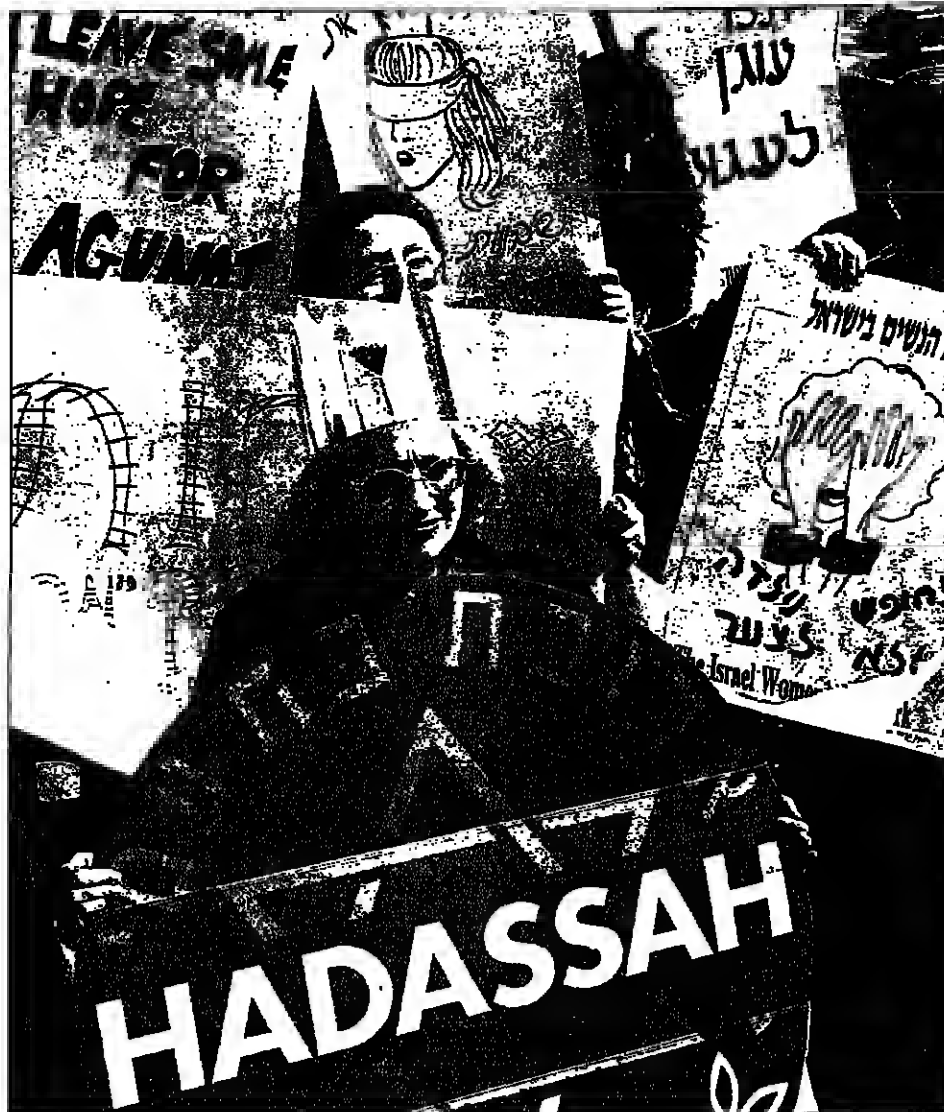
years ago to impose sanctions on recalcitrant and abusive husbands.

The sanctions can prevent the men from leaving the country, receiving professional licenses, opening a bank account or receiving jobs in the civil service, local government or security forces.

In extreme cases, 15 men have been jailed, although this has not always resulted in them agreeing to grant a divorce, he said.

The protest organisers were careful not to criticise the Orthodox religious authorities, who have a monopoly on civil and religious life in Israel, including over marriages, divorce and burial.

"We are looking for technical loopholes to fight within the system," Susan Weiss, a divorce lawyer active in the agunot issue, told the Jerusalem Post before Monday's rally.



DEMANDING FOR "A GET": Bound by handcuffs and chains, 50 Israeli women demonstrate outside the offices of Israel's chief rabbis, to demand that religious authorities stop refusing them the right to divorce abusive or absent husbands (AFP photo)

Sarah Netanyahu's marriage secrets discussed in court

RAMAT GAN (AFP) — Sarah Netanyahu, the wife of Israel's prime minister, argued in court Monday that a tell-all marriage memoir by her ex-husband violates her right to privacy.

Sarah, the third wife of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has been battling for months to prevent her

ex, Doron Neuberger, from publishing his book or even submitting the manuscript for court examination.

A family court in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Gan decided over her objections in February 1998 to allow contentious portions of the book to be submitted to the tribunal for review.

The embarrassing documents reportedly include a 93-page letter written by Sarah to Neuberger's parents as the couple's eight-year marriage was collapsing in 1987.

At Monday's hearing, Neuberger, 38, argued that the information in the book was of interest to the public as it revealed Netanyahu's

inability to fulfil her role as a first lady, court sources said.

Neanyahu countered that her right to privacy prevails over the public interest, they said.

Neuberger's lawyer, Avigdor Feldman, sought during the hearing to question Netanyahu about her functions as the premier's wife in order to

back up his client's case.

The judge disallowed the questions, but Feldman said he would appeal the decision.

The hearing was held behind closed doors and the court ordered that no information about the substance of the book be published.

No date was set for the next hearing.

Sarah Netanyahu's private life has been a regular feature in Israel's scandal-bungry newspapers since her new husband was elected prime minister in May 1996.

The media has painted her as being unstable, fiercely jealous and tyrannical with hired domestic help.

No quick fix for Israel in Lebanon

By Daniel Sternoff
Reuters

TEL AVIV — Israel's threat of an all-out military offensive against Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon may be more bark than bite.

Israel attacked a string of Hizbollah positions on Sunday after a general, two soldiers and a reporter were killed in a southern Lebanon roadside bombing, and vowed to continue to pound the Iranian-backed guerrillas from the land, sea and air.

But the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah (Party of God), fighting to oust Israel from its southern Lebanon occupation zone, may not take Israel's bait.

"Everyone is waiting to see how Hizbollah will react. There is no escalation of the situation because Hizbollah is so far not responding," said an Israeli security source.

Bracing for potential Hizbollah rocket attacks in retaliation for Israel's air strikes, residents of northern Israel were told to remain in bomb shelters on Monday.

But a second security source said that if Hizbollah rested on its laurels after killing seven Israelis in the past week, including a brigadier-general, Israel's threatened retribution would likely be averted.

"If there will be no Katyusha rockets, it looks like this round could be all over," the source said.

The threat of an Israeli assault into Lebanon in the run-up to a general election on May 17 was remi-

niscence of a far-ranging military blitz ahead of Israel's 1996 polls in which more than 200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, were killed.

But analysts doubted that electoral considerations would drive Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu into any major military assault.

"People have mostly already made up their minds. They're not going to vote for or against Netanyahu because of an action he takes in Lebanon," said Barry Rubin, an analyst at Israel's Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies.

Rubin said the right-wing Netanyahu, unlike former Prime Minister Shimon Peres during the 1996 campaign, did not need to shed an image of

being "soft." Aside from the heightened sabre-rattling and the painful loss of Brigadier-General Erez Gerstein, the highest ranking Israeli officer killed in Lebanon since 1982, little has changed on the last active Arab-Israeli front.

Israeli radio stations broadcast a familiar repertoire of sombre music and announced the times of military funerals.

A smattering of demonstrators again took to the streets to demand Israel bring its boys home from the war of attrition across the northern border.

Israel's politicians took to the airwaves to rattle off a well-worn list of ideas to extract the country from what Israelis mournfully call the "Lebanese mud." Rounding out the clock-

work response to a spike in Lebanon casualties, Netanyahu convened an emergency session of his security cabinet, issuing a brief statement which appeared to offer few new policy measures.

"The ministerial committee was briefed that the army is prepared to continue to fight the terrorist forces in Lebanon," the statement said.

Neither Netanyahu nor opposition forces vying to topple him in May offered any new political or military solutions.

Netanyahu's aide, David Bar-Ilan, repeated Israel's desire to see the Lebanese army deploy south and restrain Hizbollah to enable Israeli troops to withdraw from the 15 km southern Lebanon occupation zone under U.N. Res-

olution 425 of 1978. Lebanon and Syria, the main powerbroker in Lebanon with 35,000 troops there, have resisted the idea since Israel adopted it last April, demanding an unconditional Israeli pullback.

Yitzhak Mordechai, Netanyahu's former defence minister who now is trying to oust him as head of a centrist party, repeated his opposition to a unilateral troop pullback from Lebanon.

Opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak restated his call to reopen peace negotiations with Syria over the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to try to forge a solution to the Lebanon problem.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran blasts Arab League condemnation of games

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's foreign ministry on Monday lashed out at the Arab League's condemnation of its military manoeuvres near three Gulf islands claimed by both Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "These manoeuvres are essentially a use of Iran's reserve forces to defend Iran's territorial integrity," said ministry spokesman Hamidreza Assefi. Such manoeuvres "are the right of all nations and constitute no threat to the region's nations. On the contrary they are aimed at assuring the security of the strategic Persian Gulf," he said, quoted by Iranian radio.

Iran condemns Israeli strikes on Lebanon

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Monday condemned Israel's reprisal attacks on southern Lebanon following a deadly Hizbollah bombing and said it would continue to support the Lebanese resistance. "The Zionist regime is the primary source of tension in the region and Iran will continue to support the resistance of the Lebanese people," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamidreza Assefi, quoted by Iranian radio. "Iran believes the resistance is now more necessary and vital than ever and should continue until the occupied territories are liberated," he said.

Israel, Greece discuss security

ATHENS (AP) — Israeli and Greek public order officials met Monday to discuss ways to improve their cooperation on security issues, an Israeli embassy official said. "Both sides emphasised their good relations. It was a technical visit," the official said. The Israeli delegation, headed by Avraham Kohav, director general of public security, met with Dimitris Efsthadiadis, secretary general of public order, to discuss implementing a police cooperation agreement that was signed in 1995.

'Sudan's constitution open to amendment'

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's Parliament Speaker Hassan Al Tourabi said in remarks published on Monday the country's permanent constitution could be changed. The daily Al Rai Al Aam quoted Tourabi as saying the government was prepared to reconcile with anyone committed to the principle of the constitution, which was signed into law by President Omar Hassan Al Bashir in June.

Iraq restarts military training

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq is to resume military training for civilian volunteers from Saturday to help defend the country against "any outside threat," the ruling Baath Party announced. The party's Al Thawra newspaper said the necessary preparations had already been made. The volunteers will be divided into groups for a month-long course and the training courses are to continue until the end of this year, a party official told AFP, asking not to be named.

Egyptian fired for amateur circumcision

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian court ordered the dismissal of a hospital cleaner and put two others on probation for illegally circumcising boys, court sources said on Monday. Ragab Abdullah, an operating theatre cleaner at a Cairo hospital, was taken to court after one of his young patients developed a genital disorder after circumcision in March 1998. Abdullah and his accomplices, Fahmy Mohammad and Layla Al Kelawy, had offered to perform the operation on the five-year-old for a lower fee than that charged by the hospital.

Muslim leader barred from leaving Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — The authorities here Monday barred the leader of Australia's Muslim community from leaving Egypt as they investigate him for alleged antiquities smuggling, judicial officials said. The police were looking for Sheikh Tageddin Hamed, a 48-year-old Egyptian who has been on vacation in Egypt for a month, after he failed to appear in court to answer questions linked to the investigation.

U.N. shuts Turk Cypriot aid office

NICOSIA (R) — The United Nations in Cyprus on Monday shut down an aid office for Turkish Cypriots in the south of the divided island after a lukewarm reception by beneficiaries. Only 11 visits had been made to the office since it opened in December 1996 in spite of widespread advertising, the U.N. mission said in a news release.

Radio Monte Carlo to set up relay station in Qatar for Gulf

DOHA (AP) — France's Radio Monte Carlo is to begin broadcasting to the Gulf region this year from a relay station in Qatar, it was announced here Monday. The head of the Qatari radio and television broadcasting corporation, Sheikh Hamad Ben Tamer Al Thani, signed an agreement with the chairman of Radio Monte Carlo, Jean-Paul Chuzel, in Doha.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:42 Fajr
05:59 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:48 Dhuhr
15:04 Asr
17:57 Maghreb
18:54 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4632366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Afeem Syrian Orthodox

JORDAN TIMES

Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4634757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department
of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to rise

slightly with sunny weather conditions prevailing. Clouds will appear at low altitudes and winds northwesterly moderate. In Agaba, it will be warm and sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 05/18
Agaba 11/23
Deserts 03/20
Jordan Valley 10/24
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16, Agaba 21 Humidity
readings: Amman 57 per cent,
Agaba 56 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:

Ajloun 04/11
Jerash 07/18
Um Qays 06/17
Madaba 05/16
Petra 04/17
Dead Sea 11/24

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mazin Nthali 5350435

Dr. Abdel Majid Al Shahr 4391405
Dr. Khalid M'addi 5661144
Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi 5522233

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salama Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ali Shagairi (02)7100069
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)72340
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh (05)982799
Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police. 192. 4621111. 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111

TELEPHONE INFORMATION (directory assistance)

121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khaldi Maternity 4642816
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 477101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100

Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarga Govt. Hospital. (09)983323
Zarga National Hospital. (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital. (02)75555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)727275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital (02)7102831, (02)7102011
Speciality Hospital (02)7103100

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport. Tel.
(44)53300-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be sup-

plied on phone: 4875201-5

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:50 Berlin, Brussels (RJ)
11:05 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:10 Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
19:35 Beirut (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
20:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30 Damascus (RJ)
09:50 Tehran, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:30 London, Frankfurt (RJ)
18:15 Chicago, Shannon (RJ)
23:40 Beirut (RJ)

Other Flights

14:35 Istanbul (TK)
18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)
20:05 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
22:50 London, Damascus (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
23:55 Larnaca (CY)
00:55 Bucharest (RO)
02:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:25 Agaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Agaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

05:00 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Agaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Wednesday, March 2, 1999

IN BRIEF

1. Amman (J.T.) — Jordan and the Palestinians are conducting in-depth and intensive discussions over the question of Israel's settlement expansion programmes and the confiscation of Arab land in Palestine as well as the future of the city of Jerusalem, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh said Monday.

2. The Palestinians have promised to pursue discussions over these issues and to coordinate their stand with Jordan, Egypt and the U.S., said the prime minister in a statement to the Senate.

3. Tarawneh, who briefed senators about Sunday's meetings with Secretary General of the PLO Executive Committee Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said Abbas' visit was part of the ongoing consultations and coordination with the Palestinian leadership on the implementation of the Wye River accords and the adverse effects of non-implementation of those accords on Jordanian-Palestinian trade.

4. He said Jordan's future economic and trade ties with the Palestinians hinge on the implementation of the Wye River accords. He noted that the Palestinians have carried out all that was required of them by the accord. According to Abbas, the Palestinians have maintained full coordination with the U.S. in this regard.

5. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will travel to Washington by the end of March to discuss Wye River and economic assistance promised by the U.S. administration, continued Tarawneh.

6. The Oslo agreement expires on May 4, 1999. The Palestinians are entitled to declare an independent state, but the Israelis oppose this idea and would consider the move a unilateral decision, noted the prime minister.

7. He said Israel has repeatedly taken unilateral action by confiscating Arab-owned land and by annexing Jerusalem.

8. Referring to talks held with Netanyahu during his Sunday visit to Amman, Tarawneh said discussion focused on the implementation of agreements with the Palestinians which have a direct bearing on Jordan's interests.

9. The Israeli prime minister has emphasised his government's readiness to implement the Wye River accords provided that the Palestinians fulfill their own commitments, according to the prime minister.

10. The Wye River agreement commits Israel to pull back from an additional 13 per cent of the Palestinian lands and release 750 Palestinian political prisoners, among other requirements.

11. "I have also told Netanyahu that the late King Hussein played a key role in the Wye River negotiations and stressed that the accords are essential to the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track which is of paramount importance to Jordan," added Tarawneh.

12. "I reaffirmed to the Israeli prime minister our firm stand vis-a-vis the implementation of the accords, especially with regard to the Israeli troop withdrawal from occupied territories and the redeployment of Israeli forces," he said. "These two issues are instrumental for peace and in this regard I stressed the need for Israel's commitment to the implementation of the agreements."

13. Tarawneh said he and Netanyahu discussed trade between Jordan and the Palestinian self-rule areas and the obstacles that impede trade.

14. Children's task force kicks off child rights awareness campaign

15. By Susan Resbeq

16. AMMAN — Designing multi-colour posters under the theme of children's rights and displaying them across the sky of Amman using a plane is just one of the methods the National Task Force For Children will use in its nationwide media campaign on children's rights.

17. "We Work Together for the Rights of our Children," is the title of the campaign, which will last till June 6, 1999, Isam Zawawi, the task force media officer, said on Sunday.

18. Creating public awareness and knowledge of children's rights, as stated in national, Arab and international charters are major objectives of the National Task Force for Children, hence the task force's campaign, executed in cooperation with the British Council, and other governmental and non-governmental organisations.

19. One activity is to organise a national media drive to inform Jordanians about children's rights by highlighting lighting their problems and urging decision-makers to find appropriate solutions.

20. "Through this campaign we will try also to encourage governmental and local and international non-governmental organisations working in Jordan to find a comprehensive framework to serve children in various parts of the Kingdom," Zawawi said.

21. The National Task Force has produced 400 posters on children's rights, and produced greeting cards drawn by children on children's rights day.

22. The posters were distributed to governmental and private organisations concerned with children and youth, and to members of the National Coalition for Children.

23. A regional conference will be held in Jordan in March with the participation of several Arab countries. The conference will tackle children's issues in Arab countries and other related matters of children's conditions in Arab countries.

24. Ministers inspect northern crossing point

25. NORTH SHOUNEH (Petra) — Ministers of interior, public works and housing, transport, finance and planning Monday inspected passenger services at the Sheikh Hussein crossing post in the North Jordan Valley and were briefed by the Crossing Post Director Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Razaq Bani Younis on the services offered to passengers crossing the border post.

26. Bani Younis said a total of 1,242,736 passengers have crossed the post since its establishment in 1994, following the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty. He noted that in 1994, a total of 296,384 passengers crossed the post. The post was established on a 500 dunum plot of land. The first phase of establishing the border post, which cost JD4.5 million, includes four sections, one for passengers, another one for freight, a third for services and a fourth for customs. It has a duty free shop and a health clinic. Work on the second phase, which will cost JD1.9 million has already started. It includes a housing estate for workers at the crossing post.

27. Court sentences Iraqi national to death in Abu Wendy murder

28. AMMAN (J.T.) — The criminal court has sentenced Iraqi national Ali Anad to death after convicting him of murdering Abdul Naeem Abu Wendy, 45, last September near Ma'in.

29. A report in the local press Monday said two accomplices in the crime, Sharif Shadan (an Iraqi national) and Fawaz Eid (a Syrian national), have been sentenced to 20 years in jail with hard labour.

30. The three men, who were employed as farm workers at Abu Wendy's farm in Ma'in, were arrested in Irbid shortly after the discovery of the murder on Sept. 14, 1998, and confessed to have assassinated Abu Wendy, a professor of international law at the University of Jordan. The police said the three were trying to flee the country across the border with Syria when they were arrested.

31. According to police, the three had been supplied with pistols by the victim to guard his stables in Ma'in and when arrested they confessed to complicity in the murder of the professor. Court records showed that the three were involved in a dispute with Abu Wendy over their working conditions shortly before they carried out their crime.

32. The criminal court also sentenced Riad Okla for murdering his own cousin in a case of family vengeance, Okla shot and killed his cousin, Bader, outside the criminal court which was trying the victim. He was killed instantly.

33. However, the court commuted the sentence to 10 years in jail with hard labour after his cousin's family dropped charges against him.

34. Lawyers predict leftist-nationalist alliance will limit Islamist influence on JBA board

35. By Mohammad Ben Hussein

36. AMMAN — Jordanian lawyers find themselves hard-pressed to predict a winner in the upcoming bar association's elections, saying the March 13 poll will be a tight race among the seven candidates.

37. But they unanimously agree that the next executive council of the Jordan Bar Association (JBA) will not be top-heavy with representation from any one faction. To the contrary, the council will be comprised of representatives from all political movements, they maintain.

38. "Everybody is doing his best to win (the elections), and I believe the council will be a mixture of all political factions," says Mahmoud Kharabshah, a lawyer who is also a deputy in the Lower House of Parliament. "I believe this will positively contribute to the profession and the lawyers."

39. Three candidates are said to be in the lead for the prestigious seat.

40. Some observers anticipate that Walid Abdul Hadi, a former Ba'athist, and Saleh Armoudi, an Islamist, will be neck-and-neck in the race, while others also see strong support for Samir Kherfan, an independent nationalist and a former leftist Nassarite.

41. Trailing them is Marwan Hussein, who is expected to be supported by the Jordan Communist Party members.

42. Any of the four contestants are expected to proceed to a second round of voting. Also running are Omar Dhamra, Ahmad Abu Aarqoub, and Jawad Yunis.

43. According to the JBA, 25 candidates are vying for the executive council's 10 seats.

44. The Islamists currently claim four seats and are not expected to gain any additional slots in the next elections. They were the first to announce a list of five candidates: Ziad Khalifah, Amin Khawaldeh, Adnan Rashdan, As'ad Nashwan and Abdul Wahab Agawi for the executive council.

45. Islamists, at present, dominate on the councils of eight of Jordan's 13 professional associations.

46. But many observers believe the Islamists' chances will take a nose-dive after the first round when nationalist candidates will be forced to combine their efforts to win seats.

47. "Pundits expect the new council to be dominated by leftist and nationalist movements, including the Ba'athists and the Communists. The national trend now is clear."

48. At the moment, everyone is thinking of himself, but I believe their efforts will be pooled at the end," said Kharabshah.

49. The JBA for many years has been considered a hothouse for political activists, mostly leftists. During the 1970s and 80s, when martial law was still in force, the associations were the most prominent outlets for political expression and acted as political fora in the absence of legalised political parties.

50. The executive council has traditionally been dominated by nationalists, who have always secured the president's post and the majority of the council's seats, leaving little room for the Islamists.

51. Observers, nevertheless, ruled out the possibility of a coalition among the seven candidates before the first round of voting is concluded.

52. "Usually, no agreement is brokered before the first round finishes because everybody believes he will win the seat," said Sa'di Abdin, a prominent lawyer.

53. Bar elections are considered the most active amongst the associations: Around 95 per cent of the 3,800 members vote.

54. According to Abdin, lawyers find it very difficult to predict a winner in the elections due to the enormous number of new members every year.

55. JBA's membership roster increases by 20-25 per cent annually.

56. "New people come every year, bringing with them new ideas and orientations, and naturally this will affect the final outcome of the elections," said Abdin.

57. The new president will replace JBA President Hussein Mjalli, who has served a two-year term as president and says he will not run this year because he believes "the association needs new blood."

58. Earlier this month, Mjalli challenged the Court of First Instance order suspending Al Majd weekly newspaper for violations of the 1998 Press and Publications Law. The Court of Appeals overturned the first Instance Court decision last week.

59. S. Arabia sets crop irrigation requirements for agricultural produce imports

60. By Thaqef Ayyoub

61. AMMAN — Saudi Arabia has told Jordan it will resume imports of agricultural produce, halted in 1992, once Amman convinces Riyadh that local crops are irrigated with clean water, officials said Monday.

62. Saudi Arabia suspended imports of Jordanian tomatoes, cucumbers and other farm produce, claiming wastewater was being used to irrigate much of the crops.

63. According to officials, water used to irrigate farms in the Jordan Valley is treated wastewater from the Zarqa River Basin and from Amman that is treated at the Khirbet Al Samra wastewater treatment plant.

64. "The Saudis demanded guarantees that water being used to irrigate agricultural lands was clean and that no wastewater was seeping into these lands," one source told the Jordan Times.

65. The Saudis, he said, relayed the message to a top-level Jordanian ministerial delegation, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Taher Kans'n, that returned from Riyadh last week after discussing possible Saudi aid to the Kingdom.

66. "The Saudis were very clear," another official said. "They told us that as long as we use wastewater, even treated wastewater, to irrigate our vegetables, they will not import a single tonne from us."

67. "We must admit that the use of treated wastewater is widespread in the Kingdom especially in the Jordan Valley," the official told the Jordan Times.

68. Agriculture experts believe that it is difficult to meet Saudi conditions because the use of treated wastewater to irrigate vegetables is "a common phenomenon in the country."

69. "With the prevailing circumstances, it is impossible to fulfil the Saudi demand, because most farmers are using treated wastewater to irrigate their vegetable crops," Khairiddin Shukri, chairman of Agriculture Exporters and Producers Society, said.

70. Shukri said Jordanian vegetables are exported to other countries, including Europe, adding that "Saudi Arabia is the only party to insist on non-wastewater use."

71. In 1992, Saudi Arabia sent experts to Jordan to investigate the issue. The team later recommended not to import Jordanian vegetables. Another team is expected to arrive here "soon" to look into the matter, the government official said.

72. Saudi Arabia was the largest importer of Jordan's vegetables and fruits. In 1990, 40 per cent of Jordan's produce exports, or JD40 million worth, went to Saudi Arabia.

73. The unpopular decision was taken against the backdrop of tense Jordanian-Saudi relations because of Jordan's perceived support for Iraq during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

74. Official figures show that Saudi Arabia's imports declined from 216,100 tonnes in 1990 to 35,000 tonnes in 1993 and 30,228 tonnes in 1994.

75. Riyadh topped the list of importers of Jordanian produce from 1987 until 1990. It ranked sixth in 1996. Official figures indicate that Saudi Arabia imported only 12,600 tonnes in 1998, making seventh following the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Oman.

76. Over the last six years, Syrian and Lebanese vegetables and fruits have filled the gap left by the absence of Jordanian crops. Many private sector officials believe local produce will face an uphill battle in the Saudi market because of high stiff competition. They are banking on Saudi goodwill to help Jordan after King Hussein's death.

77. Still, Shukri believes that the best way to enhance the marketing of Jordanian products is to look for other markets and "not to put all our eggs in one basket."

78. "Our policy should be based on diversification of markets," he said. "We should not rely on markets that are politically motivated."

79. "In one year, we have thrown half of our agricultural produce away because we were not able to consume them on the local market nor to market them abroad," Shukri added.

80. Hourani calls for Jordan-Yemen free trade agreement

81. SANAA (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah has sent a message to Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh expressing Jordan's desire to strengthen Jordanian-Yemeni relations in various fields.

82. The message, carried to Sanaa by a Jordanian economic and trade delegation led by Minister of Industry and Trade Mobammad Saleh Hourani, also voiced Jordan's appreciation of the brotherly feelings and solidarity with the Kingdom expressed by the Yemeni president at the death of the late King Hussein.

83. Saleh met the Jordanian delegation, who arrived in Sanaa earlier Monday for trade and economic talks, and reviewed Yemen's ties with Jordan. He also paid tribute to King Hussein, who, he said, had maintained very strong relations with the Yemeni leadership and people and had supported Yemen on many occasions over the past 20 years.

84. Saleh expressed good wishes to His Majesty King Abdullah and welcomed the Jordanian delegation, pointing out that vast opportunities exist for bilateral cooperation in investment and joint projects particularly in medical, pharmaceutical and other fields in which Jordan has acquired considerable experience and expertise.

85. Saleh directed Yemeni government departments to facilitate the mission of the Jordanian delegation, and expressed Yemen's enthusiasm to pursue economic and trade cooperation and to encourage the two countries' private sectors to carry out joint schemes.

86. The Jordanian delegation includes representatives of the different economic sectors and representatives of 34 industrial institutions, as well as Jordanian hospitals.

87. Ministry of Industry and Trade sources in Amman said the discussions will focus on ways to increase trade volume between the two countries in accordance with trade and economic agreements signed by the Higher Joint Jordanian-Yemeni committee which convened in Amman last November.

88. Hourani addressed a meeting of Jordanian and Yemeni businessmen, expressing Jordan's desire to pursue steps leading to inter-Arab economic integration.

89. He called on Yemeni businessmen and the government to sign a Jordanian-Yemeni free trade agreement and to facilitate the flow of Jordanian and Yemeni goods to each other's markets.

90. He stressed that Jordanian institutions are ready to offer Yemenis training in electric power generation, primary health services and pharmaceutical production.

91. Yemeni Minister of Trade and Supply Abdul Aziz Karim outlined the measures Yemen has taken to implement a 1995 trade agreement with Jordan.

92. Jordan's exports to Yemen in 1994 were worth JD7.3 million rising to JD30.4 million in 1997. Hourani expressed hope that trade would grow further through the Jordanian trade centre that opened in Sanaa in 1988.

93. WHAT'S GOING ON

94. FILMS

95. "Wag the Dog" at the Books@Café, Jabal Amman, at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650458).

96. German film "Himmel Ohne Sterne" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Wednesday March 3 at 7:30 p.m.

China gives U.S. 'low marks' on human rights

BEIJING (AFP) — China, frequently targeted for its own human rights record, launched a vitriolic attack on the human rights performance of the United States Monday during a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The U.S. had "won low marks from its own people and the international community" on the human rights issue, the official Xinhua news agency said in a marathon opinion piece released as Albright held talks with her Chinese counterpart, Tang Jiaxuan.

In the 28-page commentary, Xinhua told the U.S. to "keep its eyes on its own human rights situation, mind its own business and avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other countries."

Following the release Friday of the U.S. State Department annual report on human rights, citing "widespread and well-documented" abuses in China, Beijing accused the U.S. of "deliberately distorting" facts and employing "double standards" in its human rights critiques.

The Xinhua report berated the U.S. for its high levels of violent crime, juvenile delinquency and racism, rising rates of poverty, homelessness and child abuse, and its overflowing prisons and police brutality.

"The United States also arbitrarily enforces the death penalty without justice, and jury verdicts are often affected by race and economic status," the report charged.

The news agency challenged the U.S. claim to be "the world's model of democracy," roasting U.S. voters for "losing their enthu-

siasm for participating in elections to fulfill their basic political obligations as U.S. citizens."

It blasted press freedom in the U.S. as "nothing more than a myth" in the face of waning editorial autonomy, as media outlets were swallowed up by multi-national corporations.

Widespread poverty had left millions of American children without adequate food and shelter, while "one third of homeless people in the U.S. suffer from depressive psychosis and schizophrenia," Xinhua estimated.

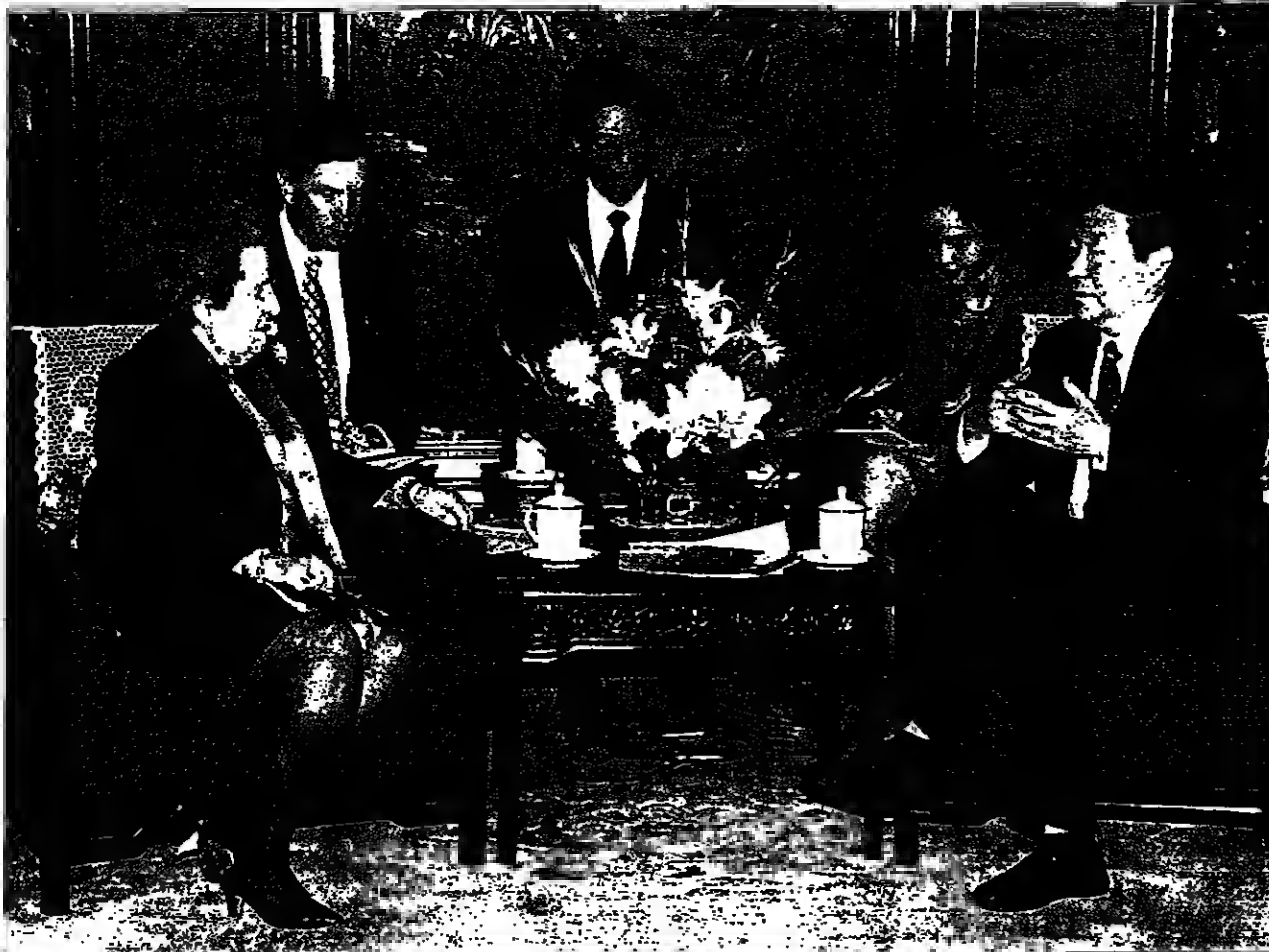
Church burning, child labour and racial segregation systems from the 1950s all came in for scathing criticism.

Using sharper language than in recent years, the State Department survey of global human rights said Beijing had abruptly ended an easing of curbs on freedom of expression and association noted in 1997 and 1998.

"The government's human rights record deteriorated sharply beginning in the final months of (1998) with a crackdown against organised political dissent," the report said, citing "widespread and well-documented human rights abuses, in violation of internationally accepted norms."

Albright, who leaves Beijing for Thailand Tuesday, traded sharp words with Tang on human rights ahead of their scheduled meetings Monday.

Her spokesman James Rubin later told a news conference that "sharp differences" still existed between Beijing and Washington on rights issues.



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (left) meets with Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji in Beijing. The United States and China clashed over human rights Monday as Albright said Washington 'deplored' Beijing's crackdown on pro-democracy activists while Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan blasted the U.S. for 'wantonly interfering in other countries' affairs' (Reuters photo)

China blasts U.S. over Pentagon missile report

BEIJING (R) — China lashed out at the United States Monday over accusations Beijing was building a major missile force aimed at intimidating Taiwan as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright clashed with Chinese leaders on human rights.

The Pentagon report on the military situation in the Taiwan Strait was a "serious interference in China's internal affairs," foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said.

"China expressed 'its serious dissatisfaction'

and resolute opposition," the Xinhua news agency quoted Zhu as saying.

The official agency said the report was part of a U.S. plan to step up sales of advanced weapons such as ballistic and cruise missiles to Taiwan.

Earlier Monday, Albright kicked off talks with Chinese leaders in Beijing with a blunt exchange of words with Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan.

Albright said Washington "deplored" Beijing's crackdown on pro-democracy activists

while Tang blasted the United States for "wantonly interfering in other countries' affairs."

The Pentagon assessment, sent to Congress last week and released Friday, did not suggest Beijing was planning to launch an attack against Taiwan and noted that the situation in the Taiwan Strait was calm at the moment.

But it stressed that Beijing, which has considered Taiwan a renegade province since a civil war ended in 1949, had refused to renounce

force against Taipei and could overwhelm Taiwan's missile defences and superior air force with sheer numbers of weapons by 2005 if a conflict erupted.

U.S. law permits sales of defensive arms to Taiwan despite Washington's shift of diplomatic ties to Beijing in 1979 and China's opposition to any arms sales to the island.

Washington has sold F-16 warplanes, Patriot missiles and other advanced weapons to Taipei, angering Beijing.

Taiwan parliament set to cast no-confidence vote

TAIPEI (R) — Premier Vincent Siew faces one of the most humiliating tests of his political career when Taiwan's parliament mounts an unprecedented no-confidence vote Tuesday.

Though Siew is unlikely to lose his post, analysts and opposition lawmakers said Monday the recall motion could hurt his reputation even as it exposes ambiguities and weaknesses in Taiwan's convoluted political system.

The move reveals some deep distrust of Siew — an economist whose trademark grin won him the nickname "smiling old Siew" — as he and his market-friendly cabinet grapple with one of Taiwan's worst slowdowns in decades.

"With the nationalist party holding an absolute majority, it's nearly impossible for a no-confidence vote to pass," said Taiwan university political scientist Lu Ya-Li.

"But the vote carries great symbolic implications," Lu said. "It will expose the serious drawbacks in our political system as well as the government's inept handling of its

economic and financial policies."

The motion was raised Friday by the popular Democratic Progressive Party and smaller new party, which control more than one third of the votes in the 225-seat legislative Yuan.

The ruling nationalists, with a clear 55 per cent majority, were widely expected to kill the motion Tuesday.

Democratic progressive lawmaker Chang Chun-Hsiung said the motion aimed to establish "reasonable" constitutional checks on power and clarify the sometimes-awkward balance of power between president, cabinet and parliament.

Under Taiwan's hybrid parliamentary-presidential system, the premier is appointed by the elected president but can be dismissed by the elected legislature.

The vote would be the first time Taiwan lawmakers had exercised their right to test a cabinet chief's support under constitutional amendments adopted in 1997.

But they get only one chance for now. The consti-

tution bars further no-confidence votes within a year.

The new motion vote arose from charges that Siew acceded to President Lee Teng-hui's pressure to drop his opposition to cutting the stock transaction tax, drawing claims that Siew had become Lee's chief of staff rather than cabinet chief.

"The operations of political power should be regulated by the constitution. They cannot supersede the constitution as under the authoritarian regime," lawmaker Chang said, referring to Taiwan's four decades under nationalist martial law.

Some lawmakers said the vote could actually help Siew.

"We know the vote won't pass. But we are willing to use our quota to express our dissatisfaction," said new party lawmaker Lai Shyh-Bao.

"Depending on how you look at it, this could also be seen as a confidence vote, meaning Siew will have at least one year to pursue his policies after the vote," Lai said.

"He will have more clout to defend his own policies in front of the president."

Clashes on Ambon kill 10, six tortured

AMBON, Indonesia (R) — At least 10 people were killed as new clashes between Christians and Muslims rocked Indonesia's feared island of Ambon, witnesses and officials said Monday.

Six people were tortured to death after clashes with machetes and spears broke out late Sunday afternoon, national police spokesman Brigadier-General Togar Simanipar told a news conference in Jakarta.

And four were killed as security forces opened fire near a mosque early Monday, said a local journalist who was able to give the names of the dead.

Both incidents occurred in or near the scarred city of Banda Aceh district, some 10 km east of the city centre.

Witnesses earlier put the death toll from Monday's clash at nine. Local police were not available for comment.

The official Antara news agency said the deaths occurred after home-made bombs exploded. Four people died, seven were injured and 15 houses burned in Monday's incident, Antara said, adding that low-ranking police officers had allegedly incited the mob to attack the area.

The clashes followed the signing of a peace agreement between the two sides Sunday afternoon in a bid to end weeks of unrest, Antara said.

A Reuters cameraman in Ambon said he had seen six bodies.

Asked about Sunday's incident, police spokesman Simanipar said: "I don't have any clear information on how it started, but six people died from torture." When asked about reports that security forces were taking sides in the fighting along religious lines, he replied: "It is not true. Up to now the armed forces (ABRI) are still solid."

Journalists in Ambon said Monday's incident happened around dawn as Christians attacked the area, prompting Muslims to fight back. Security forces then came and opened fire, journalists said.

One witness said police opened fire without warning on Muslims leaving the Al-Huda mosque after early prayers.

"Suddenly we were attacked by police, they were Christians," said one witness, who asked not to be identified.

About 100 people were praying at the mosque when Christians tried to burn houses in the Muslim area, the wit-

ness said.

The spice island of Ambon, about 2,300 km east of Jakarta, has been savaged by religious fighting that has killed about 200 people this year.

The violence that have swept Ambon is the worst sectarian violence to hit Indonesia in more than 15 years.

Ambon City, capital of the eastern province of Maluku, is a virtual ghost town. Few people have been venturing out and there is a heavy troops presence around the harbour-side city.

Sunday, the port was jammed as about 1,300 people rushed to flee the island after a home-made bomb exploded the previous day.

Indonesia's two largest cities, Jakarta and Surabaya, also have large Ambonese communities. In November at least 14 people were killed in Jakarta's Chinatown in clashes between Javanese Muslims and Roman Catholics from Ambon.

The country has been racked by waves of violence over the past year as ethnic, religious and social tensions boil over amid the worst economic and political crisis in three decades.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vatican to launch beatification process for Mother Teresa

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Pope John Paul II has agreed to a request to launch the process to make Mother Teresa a saint, the Vatican announced Monday. The Pope approved a request by the archbishop of Calcutta, Father Henry Sebastian d'Souza. Mother Teresa, the Albanian-born nun and Nobel laureate famous for aiding the poor in India, died in 1997. The archbishop of Calcutta can now take preliminary steps involved in beatification, such as setting up a diocesan tribunal to interrogate witnesses and collect information on Mother Teresa's life.

North Korea warns Japan could become missile target

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea's official media Monday blasted alleged Japanese military expansion, warning that Japan could become the target of a missile attack. "Our republic has already warned Japan that whether its artificial satellite becomes a missile target or not entirely depends on her attitude," North Korean newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in an article monitored in Seoul. The warning came amid growing concerns in Tokyo over North Korea's missile capability, which was thrust into the spotlight last year after the north launched a rocket over Japan. The North has denied the rocket was intended to test a medium-range ballistic missile. Rodong Sinmun accused Tokyo of justifying a policy of "overseas military expansion, our country being its first target." It also warned that Japan could not be safe under the U.S. security umbrella. "Our republic will not keep Japan out of its sights as long as the Japanese reactionaries are putting spurs on perfecting their war system against our republic." "It would be serious miscalculation if they think they can be safe under U.S. umbrella," it said. The warning marked the 80th anniversary of a pro-independence uprising on March 1, 1919, when the Korean peninsula was under Japan's colonial rule. The historic uprising is observed by the two Koreas, which have been technically at war following their 1950-53 conflict.

Pakistan wants dialogue with India to get serious on Kashmir

DHAKA (AFP) — Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Monday pressed rival India to get serious about speedily resolving the dispute over the Himalayan region of Kashmir. He told the opening session of a two-day session of Islamic developing countries here that a solution to the Kashmir row was a must for achieving peace in nuclear-power south Asia. Sharif said he had held "useful discussions" with his Indian counterpart Atal Behari Vajpayee when the latter undertook a historic bus ride last month to the Pakistan border city of Lahore. "We must now transcend symbolism and move on to concrete measures for the removal of impediments for long-lasting peace," he said. "I recently decided to resume our dialogue with India," Sharif said, adding he and Vajpayee had also agreed to "manage nuclear dimensions" of India-Pakistan relations. India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars since their independence in 1947, carried out rival nuclear tests in May, triggering fears of war in the region. India and Pakistan dispute the ownership of Kashmir and control parts of the picturesque province.

Forty held after Mauritius riots

PORT LOUIS (AFP) — Some 40 people suspected of rioting or looting were remanded in custody in Mauritius at the weekend after the Indian Ocean island was rocked by days of violent unrest. Life was back to normal Monday, with schools and colleges open for the first time in a week. The unrest was sparked by the death in police custody of popular reggae singer Joseph Topize, whose stage name was Kaya. The government has called for an enquiry into the causes of the singer's death and into the riots that followed. Three people were killed and 29 people, including some policemen, suffered gunshot wounds during the unrest, which also led to public buildings being ransacked and torched.

Three bombs found at Lusaka high court

LUSAKA (AFP) — Three bombs were found at the high court in Lusaka Monday, bringing the number planted throughout the Zambian capital to 17, officials said. The court was evacuated after the bombs were spotted by security guards, and they were later safely detonated by bomb disposal experts, the officials said. Information Minister Newstead Zimba said on national radio Sunday night that a total of 14 bombs had been planted around the city. Five exploded, one of them killing a security guard at the Angolan embassy, while the others were defused, he said.

1,000 dead during rebel occupation of Sierra Leone town

FREETOWN (AFP) — Around 1,000 civilians were killed during the six weeks that rebels occupied Waterloo, a town near the Sierra Leonean capital, a local headman told journalists at the weekend. Ansumana Kargbo said those who died were mostly those who fled into the bush between Waterloo and York after rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were chased from the capital last month. Last month a United Nations report said up to 5,000 people had died in and around Freetown since the RUF invaded the city on Jan. 6. Kargbo said he was personally repeatedly brutalised by the rebels and that around 500 houses in Waterloo were torched. Troops of ECOMOG, the Nigerian-led regional intervention force, backed by civil defence groups, retook Freetown early last month and recaptured Waterloo, which lies on a strategically important road junction, last week. "About 15,000 civilians fled Waterloo and its outlying villages into the bush. Some walked the over 40 miles into the west of the capital to escape," said the headman. "Others stayed in the bush feeding on green mangoes. The rebels would organise expeditions into the bush to rape the teenage girls and kill others." "When the area was liberated by ECOMOG, about 2,000 civilians came back followed by some 3,000 others. They are now camped around the Waterloo community centre where food is the problem," the headman said. Other villagers reported that as many as 100 women and children may have died from starvation during their ordeal in the bush.

Swiss balloon lifts off in round-world race

CHATEAU D'OEX, Switzerland (R) — A Swiss-British duo of balloonists took off Monday in a bid to fly round the world and crossed the Alps as a rival British team with an 11-day head start floated eastwards over Asia.

The Breitling Orbiter-3 craft of Swiss psychiatrist Bertrand Piccard and British pilot Brian Jones sailed up into clear blue skies above this snowy Alpine resort just after 9 a.m. (0800 GMT).

Britons Andy Elson and Colin Prescott, who are over southeast Asia, have already set an endurance record with their

Cable and Wireless balloon.

For Piccard, from a famous family of Swiss adventurers, it is a third attempt to become the first man to circumnavigate the globe non-stop in a hot-air balloon. He said the 16-day trip in the nine-tonne craft could be a "marathon flight".

"It is a very impressive moment each time. Each time it is great emotion," he told Reuters television just before take-off.

Piccard's first bid two years ago ended after a few hours when he and his Belgian crewmate came down in the Mediterranean.

On his second, his European

trip was forced to land in Myanmar after China refused to allow a flight over its territory.

In Geneva, flight director Alan Noble said the silver balloon — which at 55-metres is as high as the tower of Pisa — had crossed Switzerland and was over Italy four hours later.

"At lunchtime they were east of Aosta, Italy, having flown very close to the Matterhorn. They said it looked beautiful from that altitude which was 6,400 metres," Noble told Reuters.

"They are not going very fast at the moment, less than 30 km an hour. But the meteorologists

tell us this will pick up as they track down towards the Cote d'Azur (France) and then towards North Africa.

"This year's balloon is a better balloon than last year's, although that did set the world record by getting to Burma," China banned British balloons from crossing over its vast territory after tycoon Richard Branson and American adventurer Steve Fossett drifted into a banned zone of its airspace last December and did not land when ordered to do so.

The Swiss-registered Breitling 3 craft has permission from China to cross over a narrow corridor, south of the Himalayas.

But Noble said it was "not as big of an advantage as it might seem".

"Although they can cut across the corner of China, it may save them a day or two, but it is probably not enough to be able to catch up with Andy Elson and Colin Prescott in the Cable and Wireless balloon."

Piccard, celebrating his 41st birthday, was given a balloon-shaped cake by his three daughters and his wife Michelle.

Jones, a 51-year-old grandfather, was a British air force pilot. The balloon is expected to head south towards Algeria or Morocco before crossing Africa.

Then it will need to catch the high-altitude jet streams which move from west to east.

"The jet streams are slower than they would have been in December and January. It is quite a surprise to us that in fact we've taken off today," Noble said.

"We really thought that the season would wrap up. However, the meteorologists say they can expect to fly faster in Breitling than Cable and Wireless because they will be following a similar track, and the winds have picked up some speed."

Spain to step up measures regarding Gibraltar

MADRID (AFP) — Spanish Foreign Minister Abel Matutes said Monday that Madrid would step up pressure on the British colony of Gibraltar, which he accused of harbouring drugs traffickers and murderers.

Matutes told Spanish television that "a whole series of criminal organisations involved in drugs trafficking, abduction and murder are developing there and relying on the tolerance of the Gibraltar authorities."

He said Spain would enforce "legal and necessary measures," including the refusal to recognise companies based on the island and certain official Gibraltar documents, such as driving licences, as part of its crackdown.

Spain estimated that 53,000 firms benefit from exceptions in European law on the peninsula on its southern coast, whose sovereignty is disputed by London and Madrid.

Madrid has accused the British colony of becoming a tax haven and a centre for money laundering and drugs trafficking.

Matutes said: "We will exert pressure on Gibraltar to comply with European legislation which prevents these illegal activities. In the meantime, we will not relax the checks deemed legal by the European commission."

He added: "These actions are aimed at laying the foundations for the recovery of sovereignty (of Gibraltar)."

He warned that Gibraltar "has no future on the fringes of Spain and even less against Spain." Madrid recently increased controls on traffic crossing its border with Gibraltar after a series of spats with the colony over fishing rights in the waters surrounding the British-run peninsula.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Spanish counterpart Jose Maria Aznar agreed at last week's EU summit in Bonn to discuss the issue when they meet April 10. While Spain has claimed sovereignty to the peninsula, Britain — which was awarded Gibraltar in a 1713 treaty — has said it is up to the rock's 30,000 inhabitants to decide their future.



Presidential candidate for the People's Democratic Party Olusegun Obasanjo listens Feb. 23 to elders speak during a meeting in the home of the Emir of Northern Adamawa State. Nigeria's national electoral commission Monday formally proclaimed military ruler Obasanjo the winner of a weekend presidential election (Reuters photo)

Nigerian president-elect is a gritty old soldier

ABUJA (R) — Newly elected Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo is a gruff retired army general returning to the job he voluntarily relinquished 20 years ago.

He won a landmark election Saturday aimed at restoring democracy in Nigeria, battered by army rule since soldiers overthrew the civilian president he handed power to in 1979.

His rival Olu Falae disputed the results, calling the elections a "farce." International observers expressed concern about cheating but have not apportioned blame to either Obasanjo's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) or Falae's supporters.

Backed by formidable retired generals and other wealthy Nigerians, Obasanjo was the front-runner from the start.

Aides have tried to polish the crusty image of the 61-year-old former civil war battlefield commander but this has made no difference, judging from his public appearances.

In a major television appearance last week, Obasanjo did little to shake off the earthy style that made him the butt of cartoonists' jokes during his earlier three years in power.

"You know I like eating pounded yam, especially with egusi (melon seed) soup," Obasanjo told an interview panel in the nationally televised programme.

"And you know that I enjoy it more when I eat with my fingers. It tastes better when you're able to lick your fingers," he said, delighting a large studio audience.

Obasanjo was freed last year by present military ruler General Abdulsalam Abubakar after just over three years in Yola prison — a period he refers to as "my sabbatical."

Soon after being freed from jail, pressure on him to stand for the presidency commenced in and outside Nigeria.

His initial refusal to contest the poll was quickly worn down by friends at home and abroad who persuaded him he was the only man who could lead Africa's most populous nation into its latest attempt at democracy.

"We can make a better country; we should make a better country and the only way to do it is for all of us to resolve that this time around, we will make a better country, come what may," he said last year after finally deciding to stand.

In a country riven by tribal grievances, Obasanjo is one of the few politicians who can claim to be more popular among others than with his own Yoruba group of southwest Nigeria.

But his presidential campaign drew shadowy enemies who accused him of being a stooge of the military and the Muslim north which has dominated Nigeria since independence in 1960.

Falae, who had also been jailed for opposing Abacha's government, also focused on Obasanjo's link with the military.

Obasanjo, a Baptist Christian with a cutting tongue, reluctantly accepted his first spell of leadership in 1976, following the death of popular General Murtala Mohammed.

After retiring to his pig farm, Obasanjo was critical of fellow military men who sought to return to office through the ballot box, asking what they had left behind in the state house that they wanted to retrieve.

Having won a reputation as a democrat in a country better known for dictatorial rule, Obasanjo adopted the role of world statesman and was in 1991 considered a possible candidate for U.N. secretary-general.

He was a member of an eminent persons group which made contacts in the 1980s with then jailed South African President Nelson Mandela, starting a dialogue that paved the way eventually to an end to that country's apartheid system.

There has since been an enduring friendship between the two.

He is also well connected with several former Western leaders, a relationship his supporters hope will rub off on Nigeria.

He amplified his stinging criticism of military rule after Abacha took power in 1993 following the annulment of elections which his late Yoruba kinsman Moshood Abiola was poised to win.

But many Yorubas have never forgiven him for saying that Abiola was "not a messiah."

Born on March 5, 1937, Obasanjo was educated at the Baptist secondary school in his hometown of Abeokuta, 100 km north of Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos.

He became a teacher before joining the army in 1958 and undertook military training at schools in Britain and India.

In the 1967-70 Biafran civil war, he led a Nigerian army commando division and recorded a spectacular victory over rebels that helped pave the way for their final defeat.

Married more than once and with several children, Obasanjo lists his hobbies as farming, table tennis, snooker and squash.

Anti-landmine treaty comes into force, but without U.S.

GENEVA (AFP) — An historic treaty banning anti-personnel landmines, which currently kill or maim one person every 20 minutes worldwide, came into force Monday, but without the backing of the United States and other leading producers.

The Ottawa Treaty, signed by 132 countries after immense humanitarian pressure and symbolised by the work of the late Princess Diana, has so far been ratified by 65 signatory states.

The treaty, adopted after year-long negotiations in December 1997, forbids the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and calls on states to destroy existing stocks.

The document sets out the signatory states' determination to "put an end to the suffering" caused by these "cowardly weapons," which remain lethally active even after conflicts end.

Anti-personnel mines claim

26,000 lives every year, 90 per cent of them civilians.

Jody Williams, Nobel peace laureate in 1997 and coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), was set to join a special ceremony Monday in Oslo, where the treaty was signed.

Messages from U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique — where two million landmines are buried — will also be read out in Geneva.

A conference on mines will take place in Maputo, Mozambique, in May.

The United States refused to sign the text on the grounds that it had an obligation to protect its soldiers stationed in the demilitarised zone between the two Koreas, which is littered with the devices.

Washington's snub dashed hopes that major producers Russia, China, India, Iraq, Iran and Israel would jump on

board.

Williams, whose ICBL brings together some 90 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), has been sceptical of Washington's reasoning on the issue.

"While we appreciate the involvement of the U.S. in mine clearance around the world, it is incongruous that the U.S. wants to clean up the mess while at the same time retaining the right to produce and use anti-personnel mines," Williams has said.

"The U.S. implies that if it were to sign the treaty, suddenly the North (Korea) would be inspired to invade the South," she said.

U.S. backing would have given extra muscle to the treaty, which aims to put a stop to the humanitarian disaster caused by the mines, of which between 70 and 110 million are strewn across up to 70 — mostly poor — countries worldwide.

The estimated cost of clear-

ing mines has been put at \$30 billion, while the NGO Handicap International has warned of renewed use of the weapons in signatory countries such as Angola and Senegal.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has said that the treaty can only be considered a success "if the number of victims is reduced and if agricultural lands (where the mines are buried) are once again cultivated."

Some 360 models of landmine have been marketed at a cost varying between three and 300 dollars by around 100 firms and agencies worldwide.

While around 70 countries are afflicted by active landmines buried in their soil, the majority are concentrated in 12 countries:

Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia, Eritrea, Iraq, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Somalia and Sudan.

KLA hands over Serb corpse, mediators visit Kosovo

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — Ethnic Albanian guerrillas in Kosovo handed over the body of one of two missing Serbs Monday, adding to tension just as international mediators arrived to try and keep the peace process alive.

The two were handed over. One is a body, the other is alive," a spokesman for the international verifiers overseeing a ceasefire in Kosovo said by telephone.

As he spoke, mediators Chris Hill and Wolfgang Petritsch arrived in Kosovo to meet ethnic Albanian leaders who face a split with hardliners over their support for an international autonomy plan for the Serbian province.

The run-up to a new, March 15 deadline for a settlement has been marked by an upsurge in violence.

At least 350 Kosovo Albanians driven from their homes by recent fighting in the

Kacanik area of southern Kosovo were sheltering in a forest gully Monday.

Verifiers were trying to evacuate two three-week-old infants who were believed to be suffering from exposure, while another woman in the refugee group was in the final stages of labour.

Further north, the town of Oranovac, where the abducted Serbs came from, was particularly on edge.

The verifiers, in Kosovo under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to oversee a ceasefire, said there was a heavy police and army presence in the town in Kosovo's south west.

About 300 Serb police and security troops patrolled the streets Monday, a senior verifier said. He said he had been told the larger-than-normal deployment was to search for the two missing Serbs, wood-

cutters who disappeared Saturday.

The spokesman for the verifiers later said the body of the missing Serb would be handed on by his team to police.

The ethnic Albanian-run Kosovo information centre said at least two villages near the Macedonian border — Rezance and Krivenik — were sealed off by Serb forces Monday.

Up to 3,000 villagers were reported to have fled Kacanik, around 15 km from the border, Sunday after fighting broke out between government troops and ethnic Albanian guerrillas.

At least one Serb policeman, and one rebel fighter were killed and several other fighters were wounded in the clash.

Most of the villagers who had fled stayed with relatives or went to other villages to spend the night, international aid workers said.

The Oranovac area has been

tense for several days. Armed, drunken Serb civilians wandered the town Saturday night demanding that authorities find the two missing Serbs.

The Kosovo information centre also reported some shelling around Vucitrin in northern Kosovo, the site of sporadic fighting since peace talks ended in France last Tuesday.

Hill and Petritsch, two of the mediators leading 17 days of peace talks in Rambouillet, France, which ended last week with a plan to resume on March 15, were expected to meet ethnic Albanian leaders to discuss the peace process.

After giving conditional agreement for a political settlement which calls for a large measure of self-rule for Kosovo, the representatives of its ethnic Albanian majority requested time to consult people before signing up for the deal.

Anwar says police chief may evade punishment over beating

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Anwar Ibrahim, the jailed former deputy prime minister, said Monday that he feared the former police chief who assaulted him in custody may go unpunished.

Abdul Rahim Noor, who resigned as inspector general of police last month over speculation about his role in the beating, admitted Sunday through his lawyer that he punched and slapped Anwar on the night of Sept. 20.

"I do not have confidence in the credibility of the attorney general in taking action against Tan Sri Rahim in the light of the attorney general's prejudice against me and his role in the conspiracy to topple me," Anwar said in a statement that was read to reporters by his wife.

Anwar referred to Abdul Rahim using his government-given title of Tan Sri.

Anwar's statement came as senior police officials described the beating to a probe panel and said there were orders from the chief to deny the wounded prisoner medical attention.

Monday's details further discredit the Malaysian police, which have been condemned by human rights groups at home and overseas for allegedly using harsh methods

such as torture.

The accounts could also lead to fingers being pointed at Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who until last month held the home ministry portfolio and was in charge of police.

"The question that arises now is, did Tan Sri Rahim beat me up on the instructions of the prime minister or was his anger the result of the rift between the prime minister and I," Anwar said in Monday's statement.

Attorney General Mohd. Abdullah, the government's chief prosecutor, would have to bring charges if Abdul Rahim was to be punished for assaulting Anwar on the night of his arrest.

Mohd. has also been leading the prosecution against Anwar in his trial on four charges of corruption. Defence lawyers have argued against Mohd. taking that role because they allege he was part of a high-level political conspiracy against Anwar, who also faces six other charges, including those of sodomy.

Anwar, 51, has said he was beaten unconscious hours after armed police commanders wearing ski masks smashed through the front door of his house and marched him

away. He was handcuffed and blindfolded when he was attacked. Anwar's injuries were not known to the world until nine days later, when he showed up in court with a black eye and bruises on his neck and body.

Abdul Rahim's admission of responsibility came before a special panel set up to probe the police violence.

Monday, senior police officers described the beating that took place soon after Anwar was arrested for organising a mammoth rally in central Kuala Lumpur, when more than 30,000 people demanded Mahathir's resignation.

"I saw Dato Seri Anwar sprawled on the cement slab on his back. I also found Tan Sri Rahim was still beating him. I saw his hands in the process of hitting," said Ramli Yusoff, the deputy head of the criminal investigation department. Dato Seri is a title.

He stood up in the witness stand, his arms swinging, throwing punches in the air.

Ramli said the police chief ordered that Anwar not be given any treatment for his wounds, which doctors later said could have been fatal. He was denied medical help for four days.

Ramli's immediate boss, Yaacob Amin, told the panel that Abdul Rahim was so violent that it took the two of them to pull him away from Anwar.

"I grabbed him by his belt from behind and pulled him towards me with my right hand," he said. He said he held the cell door with his left hand while Ramli pushed from the other side.

Yaacob said Anwar cried out in pain immediately after Abdul Rahim stepped inside his cell in Malaysia's police headquarters.

"The voice sounded in pain, begging," Ramli said.

Mahathir had initially reacted to the beating by suggesting that Anwar had injured himself to gain public sympathy. After an international outcry, Mahathir announced an internal probe.

That investigation concluded that police had indeed beaten Anwar, but the attorney general never announced the details.

Public pressure forced Mahathir to appoint the new panel, headed by a retired federal chief justice.

The panel does not have power to prosecute, but it is expected to make recommendations to Malaysia's king.

Michelin strips third star from Burgundy chef

PARIS (AP) — The Michelin giveth and the Michelin taketh away.

The 1999 edition of the influential Michelin "red" guide Monday upgraded only one restaurant to three-star status — and removed a star from a well-known Burgundy chef.

Chef Marc Meneau of the Burgundy restaurant l'Esperance fell from glory as the Michelin demoted him from three to two stars.

"That's it, I am no longer part of France's 20 first chefs."

I am no longer in the club of three stars," Meneau said French radio.

"What bothers us a little is that we didn't see it coming."

Chefs rarely foresee the humiliating demotion, as Michelin inspectors, operating under the great-

est secrecy, travel anonymously to restaurants across France.

Making the decisions all the more painful, they don't give reasons for the downgrading after the fact.

The red guide gave a third star to Michel Bras, chef at his self-named restaurant in Laguiole in the southern Aveyron region.

Bras was rewarded for his local specialties including roast whole pigeon and saute of spring vegetables. His restaurant, which is closed for five months of the year, is set to reopen April 10.

"I'm in a state of shock," Bras said in a radio interview.

"There are moments in a chef's career when you feel mature enough and when you feel that you have mastered your job to the point that you can

hope for a third star."

Only 21 restaurants throughout France and Monaco merit three stars in Michelin's powerful opinion. The three-star grade signifies "exceptional cuisine worth a journey."

Michelin's "red" guide to hotels and restaurants has aided motorists in pursuit of a good meal since its debut in 1900. The star system began in 1933.

Nine restaurants were elevated to two stars in 1999, including four in Paris: the Violon d'Ingres, Astor, Relais d'Auteuil and the Pre Catelan.

Two stars in Michelin parlance means "excellent cooking, worth a detour," while one star signifies "a very good restaurant in its category."

The 1999 guide lists 74 restaurants with two stars and 405 with one.

Michelin inspectors — their exact number is a house secret — make several visits before rendering their verdict. They also make spot checks of kitchens and toilets.

Food critics and chefs say even a single Michelin star can double a restaurant's revenues. And in a country obsessed with food, three stars can turn a chef into an overnight celebrity.

Removing a star has sent chefs into bankruptcy, depression and early retirement.

Meneau showed obvious disappointment with his demotion: "I have friends who have had this happen before and they aren't doing badly now."

"You ask yourself — 'Why me and not another?' There is no answer, so I will try to rebuild my life."

Yeltsin may need week in hospital

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin may need up to a week longer in hospital to complete treatment for a stomach ulcer, Interfax news agency said Monday.

Yeltsin was admitted Saturday to Moscow's central clinical hospital, where he spent nearly two weeks being treated for the ulcer in January. Despite Yeltsin's illness, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov began a 10-day holiday Saturday.

Interfax quoted sources as saying doctors who examined the 68-year-old Kremlin chief Monday found the ulcer was

healing.

"But, according to provisional information, it will be necessary to stay another six to seven days as an in-patient to ensure the scar heals," said the Kremlin could not immediately confirm the report.

Russian newspapers reported on their front pages Yeltsin was back in hospital. But they homed in less on his latest bout of illness than on Primakov's decision to take a break nonetheless.

"Yeltsin and Primakov hand the country to the Communists," the popular newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda wrote

in a headline, alluding to Primakov's Communist First Deputy Yuri Maslyukov.

The picture is clearly less alarmist than this. Primakov has deputised for Yeltsin on foreign trips and has assumed day-to-day responsibility for running Russia, although the president retains control of the country's nuclear arsenal.

The daily newspaper Sevodnya said Yeltsin may have insisted Primakov go on vacation as a way of diluting the premier's virtual "vice-presidential" role.

A more prosaic explanation is that both believe Russia is stable

enough politically, even if the economy is in bad shape.

In Tokyo, the International Monetary Fund's first deputy managing director, Stanley Fischer, described Russia's economy as dire and said talks on resumed credits were limping along.

Kremlin sources said Yeltsin had been expected to make his annual state-of-the-nation address in mid-March, and the economy was to have figured prominently. The speech is still in the works but it is unclear when he will make it.

Jordan Times

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 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jtimes@go.com.jo

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Many fronts to combat crime

THE CAPTURE of two "serial killers" accused of committing no less than 11 murders over the past four to five years brings to light the growing problem of crime in the Kingdom. The husband and wife team charged with the commission of a series of unsolved crimes have confessed to five murders during the investigation of six others, and in each and every case the motive was robbery.

No one condones the commission of any felony much less a crime for money or valuable objects, but the link between poverty and unemployment in the country and the rapid rise in the crime rate is too obvious to be ignored. As we commend our police force for finally apprehending the criminals in all these cases, we ask the other authorities to look into the organic link between a certain category of crimes and poverty.

What we suggest is the articulation and adoption of an anti-crime strategy, that includes faster apprehension of criminals by strengthening the capabilities of the security apparatuses, on the one hand, and alleviation of poverty and rampant unemployment which drive many people to desperation on the other.

Our police force can be bolstered in terms of manpower and technology in order to better equip them to deal with the growing crime rate. In this vein, the public as well should get some education on how to prevent crime and how to guard their lives and property from criminals. As is, too many people are turning into easy prey to the more sophisticated criminals who take their clues from what they see on television or in cinema.

The harder side of the crisis to crack is certainly the deteriorating economic situation in the Kingdom which admittedly pushes many young, unemployed and poor people towards crime. Crime cannot be combatted solely through punishment, but must also be tackled through investigating its real causes. People are not born with an innate inclination towards crime; many are pushed into it through their circumstances. In this vein, we see the harrang of press coverage of court proceedings as an impediment to the society's understanding of the reasons and circumstances behind crimes. Such knowledge could help spur action and cooperation among the various sectors to deter crimes.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'ib Mahmoud Rimawi commented on the dangers facing the peace process in the region and listed a number of examples: the three-year-old deadlock in the Lebanese-Syrian negotiations, the continuing settlements on the Golan Heights, the Judaization of Arab Jerusalem, increasing settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, the freezing of the Wye River accords, and the end to an Arab-Israeli committee in charge of the 1967 refugees. These developments have caused a halt in the work of multilateral negotiations committees, and a freezing of Arab-Israeli normalisation, said Rimawi, who noted that all this indicated that the peace process has stopped, and the Israeli war against Arab land continues, laying the blame squarely on Israel. The writer also noticed the following two factors: the Palestinian National Authority, which has quelled public action against Israel — a dangerous move that shows the weakness of the leadership — and the resistance movement in south Lebanon which continues to act "bravely" against Israeli actions. In order to rescue the peace process, multilateral political, diplomatic and public efforts are required, said Rimawi.

Al Dustour's editorial commented on His Majesty King Abdullah's talks with the Secretary General of the Palestinian National Authority's Executive Committee Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In his meeting with Abbas, the King stressed Jordan's support for the Palestinians to secure their rights in determining their fate and establishing an independent state on their national soil. The paper added that the King is following in the footsteps of his father, the late King Hussein. On the other hand, King Abdullah made it clear to the Netanyahu the importance of restoring the peace process and implementing the Wye River accord in which King Hussein was the peace broker, said the editorial. Netanyahu's election considerations have prevailed over real moves towards having real peace in the region, said the newspaper, which added that the current Israeli government will never move for concrete developments in the peace process, especially seeing as Israel is going ahead with its military operations in south Lebanon and not fulfilling its commitments.

South Lebanon: God's latest sacred killing ground

THIS IS the start of the Jewish Purim holiday in Israel, a joyous festival that commemorates the deliverance of Persian Jews from a genocide that had been planned against them. The attack was averted by the quick-thinking and morally strong Jewish woman called Esther, queen to the Persian King Xerxes in the capital city of Susa. It's all written up in the Book of Esther in the Bible.

But the Purim festivities will not be celebrated with much joy in a few households in Israel this week, for Jewish Israeli men from those households have died in Lebanon, killed by attacks from the Lebanese resistance group Hizbollah — the 'Party of God'. South Lebanon has become God's latest sacred killing ground. Hundreds of Israelis and Lebanese die annually in south Lebanon at the hands of other Israelis and Lebanese, all of whom claim to fight according to God's motivation, sanction, rules, or promise.

The sudden escalation of violence between the Israeli occupation forces and Lebanese resistance fighters in south Lebanon is neither novel nor unexpected. This tortured land again reminds us that violence begets violence, and occupation begets resistance. The current round of mutual Israeli-Lebanese attacks has led to the deaths of several senior Israeli officers in the past week — bringing to 1,539 the total number of

Israeli troops killed in south Lebanon since Israel invaded and occupied that land in 1982. The number of Lebanese dead and the pain to Lebanese civilians is much higher.

Israel's occupation of south Lebanon is striking because of its stupidity and futility, for the perpetuation of a failed and brutal policy. Successive Israeli governments have kept up the simplistic lie that Israel must remain in south Lebanon in order to protect northern Israel from attack. The reality is the opposite: the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon has resulted in far more deaths and damage to Israel — including moral and psychological damage — than were inflicted before 1982. Israel gropes for a phantom goal — a make-believe world of its own militaristic hysteria — when it seeks security for north Israel via the instrument of the occupation of south Lebanon. What it seeks does not exist on the road it travels.

When I read the Israeli newspapers on the Internet this morning, I laughed quietly to myself at the spectacle of otherwise grown men like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Moshe Arens saying things such as, "we have struck hard at Hizbollah and will strike again, if necessary," "the situation on the northern border is intolerable," and, "if we don't act, the situation will get much

worse." I buckled because of the transparent immaturity of these two young-old warriors stubbornly trying to project a face of resolute toughness and determination, when they were only sending more brave Israeli and Lebanese young men to their deaths in God's new killing ground. The Israelis have attempted virtually every possible policy in south Lebanon, including: prolonged occupation, repeated aerial bombings, massive disruption of civilian life, depopulation of whole areas of land, large-scale ground attacks using armour and infantry, attacks against targets in other parts of Lebanon, co-opting terrorised Lebanese civilians into acting as surrogates and quelling accomplices for Israel, and high-tech military wizardry of the most sophisticated nature.

What has all this led to? This week alone, Lebanese resistance fighters killed the most senior Israeli officer in the Israeli-occupied Lebanese area and three officers of the elite Paratrooper Reconnaissance Unit, including the unit commander. The latest blast that killed Brig-Gen. Erez Gerstein, head of the Israeli 'liaison unit' to occupied south Lebanon, took place south of the village of Kawka, which is inside the Israeli 'security zone.' One wonders: what the hell kind of ridiculous security zone is this, in which the top Israeli officer in the

View from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

area is blown up by a roadside bomb in a stretch of land that was supposed to make Israelis safe, not dead? This is not a security zone; it is a killing zone, because it is an occupation zone.

The Jewish festival of Purim recalls a noble and timeless story about God's inevitable punishment of the errant and the wicked — more specifically, it tells us that those who plot evil or cruel deeds against others may suffer the very fate they had intended for their chosen victims. In the Esther story, the bad guy Haman the Agagite wanted to kill all the Jews, and prepared a 75-foot-high gallows on which he planned to hang one of their leaders named Mordechai the Jew; instead, after Esther's good work, King Xerxes ordered that Haman himself be banged on the gallows. Nice

story; with a universal and eternal moral that is still pertinent.

The Israeli policy of seeking to protect the land of Jews by occupying Lebanese land has not succeeded and will not succeed, because it is morally and militarily flawed. The failure is a grotesque and tragic consequence of two mistakes: first, the mistake of thinking that the security and rights of Jewish Israelis can be ensured without simultaneously ensuring the rights of all other people in this area; and, second, the mistake of maintaining an exaggerated reliance on military means to address security concerns that are the consequences primarily of Israeli political and national injustices inflicted upon Palestinians and Lebanese.

South Lebanon and its dilemma is a consequence of the Israeli occupation of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian lands, and thus of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. Ending these Israeli occupations and negotiating peace based on equal rights and security for all is the route to resolving the problem of south Lebanon. Reasonable Israelis, and even their unreasonable prime and defence ministers, should draw this simple lesson from the history of peace-making with Egypt and Jordan. The Purim holidays may be an appropriate occasion to reflect on these facts, when Israelis recall the righteousness of Esther, and the self-inflicted death of Haman the Agagite.

Letters to the editor

The other side of biotechnology

THE ARTICLE, "Trust me, I'm a genetic engineer" (JT, Feb. 23) leaves its reader with a very negative view of biotechnology and the Monsanto company.

Having worked directly in biotechnology I must point out the other side of the coin of biotech. The industry is still in its infancy and a great deal of its potential and threats are still unknown. Fears of genetically modified (GM) food products are heightened because the media highlights the incidents in which controlled experimental results came out harmful and offensive. On the other hand positive and encouraging results rarely make it to the front-page of daily and non-scientific journals. In such a situation one can see why the general public's sentiment in general has been one of fear of GM food products. And understandably, governments need to use measures such as exacting strict labelling policies to segregate GM foods from others.

But shutting the door totally on biotechnology and biotechnological research would not be a wise policy. GM crops represent only one area of biotechnology. Aside from trying to modify the plants to be more drought resistant or disease and insect resistant, biotechnology influences other industries. GM insects are used to produce certain proteins that can be harvested and used to produce medicine that otherwise would have been more expensive, and where "naturally" produced substances seem more beneficial than synthetic ones. Research is also being done to find new ways to manufacture other drugs naturally. Other research is being carried out to find new ways to improve waste management, water purification and insect control to prevent any new epidemics.

With regard to the business side of the issue, biotechnology is seen as the new "smart-minds" industry, which it is hoped will be able to compete for new venture capital investor's money neck and neck with IT industries. Lobbying public officials has been an ethical issue even before biotechnology sold its first product. Unfortunately for biotechnology, ethical concerns are just more sensitive because of the industry's direct association to human health.

The EU still support academic research in the subject. Although the research has a non-business objective, it is still very similar in techniques to industrial related research. Both will converge at some time. Therefore, biotechnology research today varies in size and strategic direction. Stopping its development will deny us knowledge to improve human lives worldwide. Educating the general public is a very important component of biotechnology, because lack of education heightens fears as the article indicated. "It is because the biotech firms literally tried to shove the stuff down people's throats without giving them either choice or information."

The general public needs to be informed of its potential and long-term advantages. Let people make their own decisions based on facts and not biased, one-sided opinions. Regulating the industry by labelling or strict monitoring may be necessary at this stage of the game, but if we close the door on biotechnology we may never open it again, and we will never know what was inside.

Imad Madanat
 Washington
 U.S.

The future of R&D

THE ARTICLE "The right medicine" (J.T., Feb. 25-26) touched on a number of issues related to the Jordanian pharmaceutical industry some of which are worth clarifying.

It is true that the Jordanian pharmaceutical industry is the leading sophisticated industry in terms of exports, being the second export earner next to the mining industries, and it exports more than 70 per cent of its production. More importantly, the aim of this industry is to provide quality medicines at affordable and competitive prices commensurate to the level of income in Jordan as well as in the region.

It is also true that the Jordanian pharmaceutical industry manufactures low-value items like paracetamol and aspirin as well as high-value products to cater for the needs of Jordanian and Arab citizens by adopting the latest technologies in development in order to produce products which are bio-equivalent to the originators and manufactured by a different process according to the existing Jordanian patent legislation.

It is also true that multinational companies (MNCs) are taking active interest in Algeria and Egypt primarily due to economic considerations, like the market size, population etc. The pharmaceutical market sizes of Algeria and Egypt are valued around \$450 and \$900 million respectively while Jordan's pharmaceutical market size is valued at \$136 million. At the same time, the populations are estimated at 30 and 60 million respectively, while Jordan population is estimated at 4.6 million. It is evident from these indicators why MNCs are investing in these countries.

R&D capabilities in the region in general and in Jordan in particular are still at the infancy stage, and it seems evident that the development of new chemical entities (NCEs) is still outside the reach of Jordanian companies, due to the fact that Jordanian pharmaceutical companies are not large enough in terms of total sales to finance the costs of

R&D. However, this should be considered as a long-term goal in the context of collective effort at the regional level in order to ensure viability.

Usually research and development (R&D) includes two parts — the first part pre-clinical which involves chemistry synthesis development, animal efficacy, safety studies, bioavailability, pharmacokinetics and toxicology. The second part involves clinical development which involves phase "1" safety trials on volunteers, phase "2" efficacy and safety in patients (small numbers), phase "3" efficacy and safety in patients (large numbers).

The clinical development programmes aim at improving the safety and efficacy of new medicines to meet regulatory and customer requirements.

The testing can be done in a physicians' office or hospitals after informed patient consent. The conditions ideally would be no different than those in the U.S., Europe or other developed countries.

Clinical testing may benefit from having earlier access to new medicines, international know-how, scientific exchange, technology transfer and the income accrued from participating in international clinical development. This would be a first step into the clinical part of R&D. This represents a good opportunity for Jordan, especially since Jordan is blessed with a well respected medical community and centres of excellence in health care, bearing in mind that the Jordanian law is being revised to include such testing.

Finally, this vital sector deserves the utmost support and attention of our government as well as friends and partners, notably the European Union whom we have signed an Association Agreement with.

Maher S. Matalka
 Secretary General
 The Jordanian Association of Manufacturers of
 Pharmaceuticals & Medical Applications
 Amman

Another political circus

IF MR. Marwan Nasser (A sorry sight, J.T., Letters to the editor, Feb. 22) had read between the lines, he would have detected that the ad was meant to condemn the acts of the president and those who tried him. His acquittal simply proved that no one, including Congress, has the right to rule by one set of rules and judge by another set of rules. To be more specific, no one has the right to be judge and jury at the same time.

Lying, cheating, naughtiness are immoral. Double standards and hypocrisy are not virtues and crime does not pay. Self-righteousness not only applies to ourselves but also to others.

We only hope that the intended meaning in the ad is now be clear to anyone who missed it.

Said El Turk
 Amman

Utopian weekend

REFERRING TO your story "Cabinet likely to announce two-day weekend" (J.T., Feb. 25), I can't but agree with the source saying that the total number of lost days of work or productivity is about 180 a year. If the Cabinet goes for a Thursday-Friday weekend, now that banks have decided to close on Saturdays, it doesn't take a genius to figure out how many days of real work are left. Not to mention Sundays when we can't get in touch with businesses in the Europe, U.S., etc. Perhaps working Monday through Wednesday is enough, but I thought that would do only in Utopia.

Jean-Claude Elias
 Amman

Letter of condolence

LIKE ANYONE in this world, we were shocked when we heard that His Majesty King Hussein had passed away. We are big admirers of Hussein for his wisdom and vision.

It is hard to forget a King who dedicated all his life to serve the people of Jordan in particular and the world as a whole. We are praying for your soul Your Majesty, you will be remembered as long as we will live since you are residing in our hearts and souls, and because you made of your beloved Jordan a place of stability, tranquillity, dignity and peace.

To Her Majesty Queen Noor and the Royal family we would like to express our deepest sorrow and sympathy.

We pray to God to give King Abdullah and Crown Prince Hamzah, wisdom and courage to lead our country and to follow in the footsteps of their father, King Hussein.

May his soul rest in peace.

Hussein Ali Othman-Kufersoun
 Omar Hrnoud Al Hatamleh Al Husn
 Amman

The two faces of Israel

By Ray Hanania

WHEN IT comes to double standards, Israel takes the biscuit. They manage to speak so eloquently from both sides of their faces at one time.

From deep in the Negev Desert, Israeli officials loudly proclaim the necessity to imprison thousands of Palestinian civilians on charges they insist that they need not explain to anyone, including the person who is imprisoned.

The prison terms average six months, but often run into years. These prisoners are neither given the opportunity to defend themselves in a court of law — where Israel believes it need not take most Palestinians — and it insists that its security far outweighs the obvious violations of human rights that these imprisonments exact upon their non-Jewish victims.

On the other hand, from both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Israeli officials are crying crocodile tears complaining about the "injustices" of the Arab countries, such as Egypt, and even the United States where two of their "spies" have been caught red handed! You see, when the sandal is on the other foot, Israel feels it deserves more than it is willing to give.

Take, for example, the case of Jonathan Pollard: a U.S. naval intelligence officer who stole top secret documents from the U.S. government to give to Israel so that Israel could identify American spies and expose American defences. Israel could sell that information to other countries that opposed the United States.

He was sentenced before a court of law. He was given an attorney and the right to a legal defence. The Israeli government even admitted that Pollard was their spy.

He was given the right to raise funds in the United States and in Israel to pay for his defence.

In the end, Pollard was convicted in a democratic court of law and sentenced to life by that court of law. His jail term is filled with the comforts of normal life, including a television, good food, excellent medical attention, and the right to see his family and friends on a regular basis.

Pollard continues to receive far more than any

'When it comes to double standards, Israel takes the biscuit'

of the thousands of Palestinians who remain in the harsh environments of Israeli jails and prisons — prisons that are more like concentration camps. Nonetheless, Israel wants Pollard released.

Then there is the case of Azzam Azzam, an Israeli citizen for whom the evidence clearly shows he was spying for Israel.

In Egypt, Azzam could be sentenced to death — a fitting punishment for someone who participates in espionage.

Israel argues in response that Azzam should be released, insisting also that he should not be executed, because Israel does not execute its prisoners.

Oh really? How about so-called "terrorists" who have been caught by Israeli soldiers and executed on the spot because the soldiers hated Arabs so much? How many times has that happened in the past, denied at first, and then admitted in the memoirs of some retired Israeli Mossad agent or military officer. The Israelis are relentless and they invoke every moral argument available to support their case.

But where do they find these moral arguments? In the jails in the Negev Desert where Palestinians are mistreated daily, abused, punished, and denied the very basic human rights that are advocated by the very same Geneva Convention that Israel refuses to recognise? Oh, how moral is Israel? I just wish Israel would apply the same standard of morality to the Palestinian people that it so hypocritically demands for its "own" people.

But that might be asking too much from a country that claims to be "the only democracy in the Middle East."

The writer is a Palestinian American writer and journalist.

Sephardic Jews may be kingmakers in Israel's elections

By Daniel Sternoff
Reuters

ISRAELIS HAVE long watched secular politicians chart their paths to power through the courts of revered rabbis, hoping to turn blessings into ballots come election day.

But where others would settle for a handshake, Israel's sacked Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai raised eyebrows by gently kissing his index finger after stroking the beard of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef — a gesture of respect among Sephardic Jews.

Born in Iraqi Kurdistan, centrist party leader Mordechai is the first Sephardic Jew with roots in the Middle East and north Africa to even launch a bid to be prime minister in a country long dominated by Ashkenazic Jews of European origin.

And by turning his back on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party, the long-time address for working class Sephardic anger at an Ashkenazic elite, Mordechai's candidacy in the May 17 general election has let what Israelis call the "ethnic demon" out of the bottle.

Israel's main political parties are organised largely around their ideological stance on ceding Israeli-occupied lands to make peace with the Arabs.

Israelis, however, often vote less on questions of territory than on social issues of identity and ethnic origin. Parliament hosts a jumble of parties representing Russians, Sephardim, Israeli Arabs and ultra-orthodox Jews.

"We are a nation of tribes," explains Moshe Karif, spokesman of Keshet, a fledgling Sephardic consciousness movement. "And every tribe wants revenge on the other," while not a monolithic bloc. Sephardim have burned with resentment over the way Israel's Ashkenazic founders handled their mass immigration from Arab lands in the 1950s after the foundation of the Jewish state in 1948.

Many were thrust into tent cities and ramshackle public housing in development towns on the country's fringe in a bid to populate the embattled young country's periphery with Jews.

A second generation grew up in these depressed areas with poor schools, few jobs and a high crime rate.

Sephardim have over the years climbed to top posts in politics and the army — new army chief Shaul Mofaz, an Iranian Jew, is a prime example — but remain highly disadvantaged in education, business and top professions.

Sephardim complain that Israel's socialist eastern European founders, seeking to forge diaspora Jews into a new secular Israeli nation, scorned Sephardic culture and looked down on their adherence to a more traditional Judaism.

Numbering just under half of Israel's Jews, Sephardim have altered Israel's political landscape.

The hawkish Likud Party in 1977 ended the Labour party's 30-year monopoly on Israeli power, largely by channelling Sephardic anger against

the country's founding Ashkenazic elite.

Sephardic loyalty to Likud is deeply ingrained. Many Sephardic doves shudder at the thought of voting Labour.

Shas, a Sephardic ultra-orthodox Jewish party, is the third largest force in parliament and the second highest faction in Netanyahu's ruling coalition.

As May's general election approaches, Israeli politicians and parties are harnessing their Sephardic credentials.

"The test is in the hands of Sephardic voters," Daniel Ben-Simon, a Moroccan-born journalist who has written extensively on Israel's ethnic divide, told Reuters.

Opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak has made ending two decades of punishment at the polls by Sephardim a key element of his strategy to oust Netanyahu.

In 1997, Barak made a formal apology to Sephardic Jews for their treatment by his Labour Party forebears. He has campaigned in development towns hardest hit by rising unemployment and stagnant growth in Netanyahu's three years in power.

Labour has pushed Moroccan-born legislator Shlomo Ben-Ami to the forefront of the party's efforts to put social issues at the top of the 1999 campaign.

But Barak's efforts to shed Labour's image as a bastion of the Ashkenazic elite have failed to take off, largely due to his refusal to fire a senior aide, former major-general Ori Orr, for

'If Mordechai stays in the race until the end... Likud's traditional Sephardic voters will have to decide between ethnic and party loyalty... and smart money bets on Sephardic pride'

defamatory comments about Sephardim in an interview.

Netanyahu has seized on Orr's ethnic slur to hammer home the message that Barak's apology was empty.

Labour punished Orr in internal primaries this month, but the party provided more grist for Netanyahu's campaign mill when Ethiopian-born Labour member of parliament, Addisu

Messele, accused his party of "racism" after his poor showing in the internal poll.

But Netanyahu himself may not be able to take Sephardic support for granted.

The two most senior Sephardic politicians in Israel's history — Mordechai, sacked as defence chief last month as he plotted to join a new centrist party, and former foreign minister David Levy — have left Likud and are acting to oust Netanyahu.

"Netanyahu has never been in danger of losing control until now," said Ben-Simon.

In a move seen to improve his standing with Sephardim, Netanyahu this month appointed Meit Sheerest, the Likud's popular Moroccan-born parliamentary whip, to serve as finance minister in a transitional government until the election.

Ben Simon said that if Mordechai stays in the race until the end — polls show him third behind Barak and Netanyahu — Likud's traditional Sephardic voters will have to decide between ethnic and party loyalty.

And in the age when ideological lines between Likud and Labour have blurred — both parties have ceded biblical West Bank lands to the Palestinians — Ben-Simon says smart money bets on Sephardic pride.

Assessing Sephardic power at the polls requires a pilgrimage to the court of Iraqi-born Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a former chief rabbi of Egypt and Israel and the spiritual leader of Israel's only purely Sephardic party, the ultra-

orthodox Shas.

Under Israel's electoral system, voters cast separate ballots for prime minister and for a parliamentary list. Winning Shas' backing is a political plum for any would-be leader.

Promising to "restore the glory of old" to a proud Sephardic culture tracing its roots to a golden age of Jewish science and learning in medieval Muslim Spain, Shas is Israel's only ultra-orthodox party to attract the votes of secular Jews.

"Other religious parties only look out for their own. We have looked out for welfare, for rehabilitating schools, for people the state forgot," said Shas lawmaker Shlomo Benizri.

Shas has built up a track record of political pragmatism, surviving Israeli government swings from left to right while maintaining a slice of power.

Ovadia Yosef stands out among major Israeli rabbis with a religious ruling that ceding West Bank lands is permissible if doing so will prevent bloodshed and save lives.

Shas has blossomed in Israel's poorest quarters, using budgets extracted through coalition agreements to run a growing network of revivalist day care centres and schools.

"People want tradition in their lives. People want Judaism," Benizri told Reuters.

And among traditionalist Sephardic Jews, most of whom do not strictly observe orthodox Jewish law in full but maintain a deep respect for rabbis, Yosef's word — and blessing — holds sway.

Antarctic tourism tests fragile ecosystem

By Clyde Russell
Reuters

THE THIN tracks in the snow are called Penguin highways and the seabirds use them to reach their rookeries — until their paths are blocked by camera-snapping tourists.

This summer season more than 10,000 people are expected to visit Antarctica, a record number which could test the limits of the frozen southern continent's fragile environment.

The overwhelming majority of these tourists will come by ship, mainly from South America but a few from New Zealand and South Africa.

The ships are generally small expedition-type vessels carrying around 100 passengers, but the limited number of landing sites visited by the vessels means certain Antarctic attractions, and their wildlife, are exposed to thousands of people each year.

Tourist numbers rose by 25 per cent from the 1996-97 season to that of 1997-98, according to figures from the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO).

All but one of the main tour operators belong to IAATO, a voluntary body formed in 1991 which aims to enforce a code of conduct for the companies and their clients.

Chief among these rules is that not more than 60 people can be landed at any one time at a site and they must observe strict rules not to disturb the wildlife or the environment.

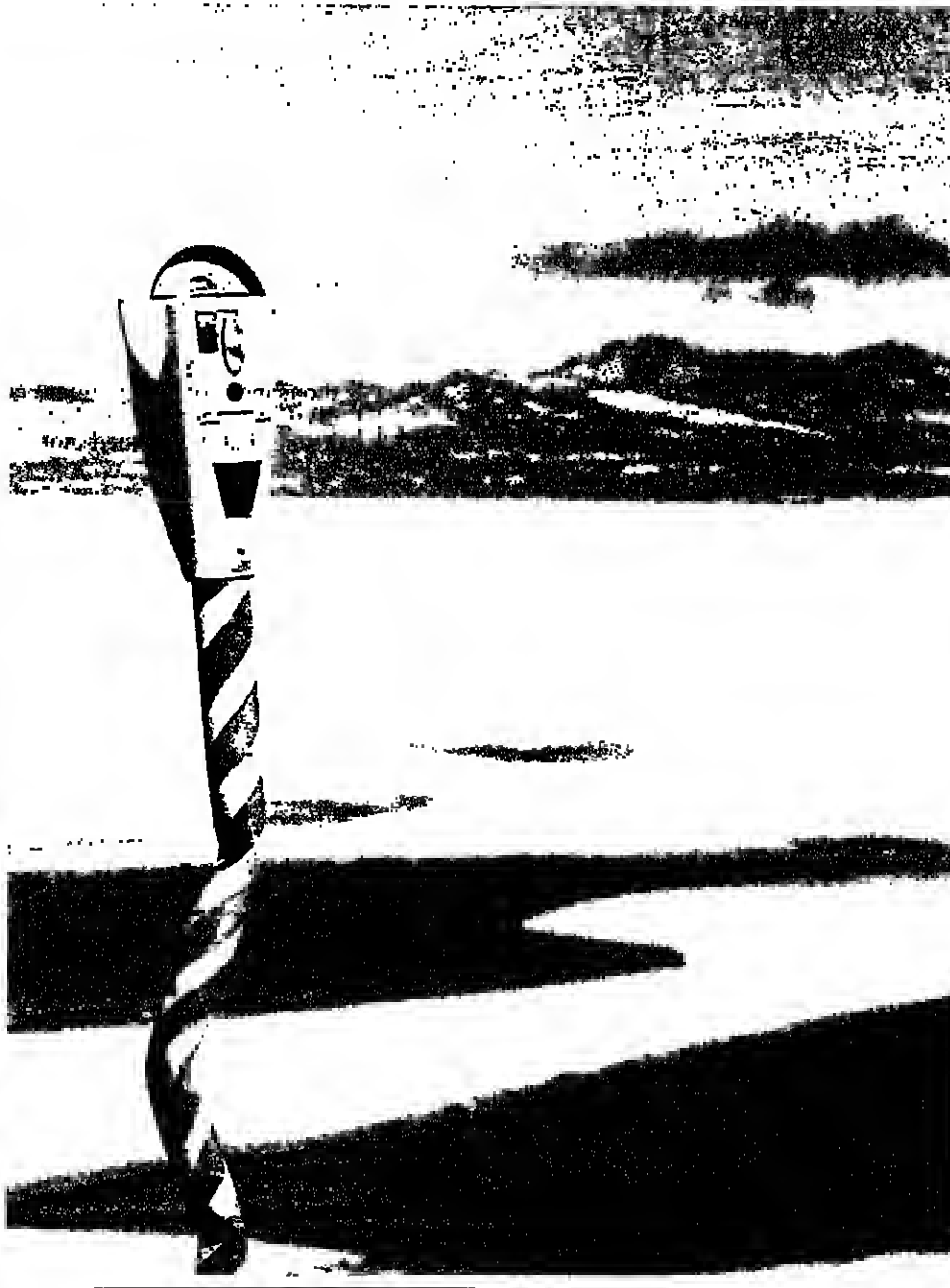
But at a place like Half Moon Island, a small hunk of rock in the South Shetland Islands off the Antarctic peninsula, even 60 people probably look quite formidable to a 60-centimetre chinstrap penguin.

Although the IAATO guidelines are strict and drummed into visitors' heads by expedition leaders, not all follow them.

Expedition leaders tell of people picking up penguins, going too close to elephant seals and driving nesting birds, such as skuas, from their eggs or chicks.

"People think they don't have to follow the rules," says Shane Evey, an expedition leader with Canadian-based Marine Expeditions.

Despite the problems posed by tourists and the dangers to the environment presented by the ships that bring them down under, Evey believes opening up the Antarctic is a good



AND IF TOURISM CONTINUES TO GROW? Right now parking is free in Antarctica, but as seen in this recent, undated picture at New Zealand's Scott Base, on the shores of McMurdo Sound, someone has gone to the trouble of planting a parking metre with one of the world's finest views — looking over the ice sheet to the Transantarctic Mountain Range (AFP photo)

thing as it gets people interested in conserving one of the world's last true wilderness areas.

"We have an impact, but it is a minute impact in a minute area," Evey told Reuters on a trip from the Argentine city of Ushuaia to the Antarctic peninsula and offshore islands.

His views are echoed by IAATO's Darrel Schoelling, who says the type of tourist who visits the Antarctic is likely to be environmentally aware.

"There is great value in experiencing a place as you are more likely to pay attention to political developments," Schoelling told Reuters from New York.

Bernard Stonehouse of the Scott Polar Institute at Cambridge University in eastern England also believes that the negative effects of tourism are outweighed by the positives.

"Ship-borne tourism has a

very good record of environmental concerns," he told Reuters.

However, he sounds a warning for the future, saying that if the steady increase in numbers of visitors continues, the 100 or so regular visiting sites could be degraded.

"If the industry continues to expand at the rate it has been, in a year or two we could be in trouble," Stonehouse said.

Current scientific studies have found that tourists have little or no effect on the wildlife.

A recent study on Cuverville Island, which monitored the heart rates of nesting penguins in the presence of humans and their subsequent breeding success, found that the effects of tourism were trivial.

"Our conclusion was that if people follow the guidelines, there are no prob-

lems," he said.

While operators and many scientists see little environmental impact from tourism, all stress that the behaviour of visitors has to be closely controlled.

The privilege of visiting the Antarctic with its stark but stunning vistas, unbeatable wildlife and sense of adventure does not come cheap, another factor that may ensure the continent's survival.

There is also another inhibiting factor — the Drake Passage. No matter where you come from you have to cross the roughest body of water in the world and the smaller expedition ships commonly used are nowhere near as stable as luxury liners.

"The Drake is the price you pay — it intimidates people," says Evey of the sea that could well be Antarctica's guardian angel.

Thailand moves to stop wild elephants, farmer conflict

By Sutin Wannabovorn
Reuters

A FEMALE elephant herd commander emerges from dense jungle on the edge of an open valley in the shadow of Thailand's southern mountains.

She waits patiently and makes a thorough survey of the terrain until sunset before signalling to the rest of the herd to come out of hiding and move to large piles of food that soldiers have left for them.

Seven wild elephants eat the prepared food nervously, while metres away from them, animal researchers hidden in the bushes monitor their movements.

This is Thailand's Kui Buri National Park and the site of a unique experiment by Thai environmentalists to help elephants and farmers live in peace in a region that has seen generations of conflict between human beings and pachyderms.

Encouraged by King Bhumibol Adulyadej, officials are conducting a long-term project to try to keep elephants inside protected areas of parkland and away from the vast pineapple plantations that have sprung up in recent years to employ many local residents.

The project began last year after three elephants were found dead — two poisoned and one from gunshot — in the national park in Prachuab Khiri Khan province on the border with Myanmar, about 250 km south of the Thai capital, Bangkok.

Project organisers use a fleet of military trucks to dump 10 tonnes of sugar cane, pineapples and other fruits three times a week at several points that wild elephants usually cross on their routes from the mountains to the pineapple farms.

"We are feeding them here during the dry season to lure them away from farm-

land. This is a short term action. We also have a long term project initiated by the king to help wild elephants and farmers co-exist," said Bunlue Choonil, chief of Kui Buri National Park.

Conflict between elephants and humans has been heightened in recent years as pineapple farms have grown and some of the natural habitat has been eroded by development.

Kui Buri is a rich, fertile plain in a valley beneath the Tanasari mountain range where farms now grow pineapples in an area of some 96,000 hectares, producing about 1.2 million tonnes of fruit a year for 18 canning factories in the province.

But in the past few years, farmers have said at least 30 per cent of their crop has been destroyed and eaten by invading herds of wild elephants that have come in from the region's 450 sq km of forest.

Sathorn Khaikhaew, a farmer near the park, said his farm alone had lost at least 10 tonnes of fruit annually from 192 hectares of pineapples due to wild elephants over the last few years.

"All the wild elephants look healthy and I think there is plenty of food for them in the jungle. They come to this area because they are now addicted to the taste of pineapples, which are easy to find," he said.

"We also have a protection squad here and the elephants don't want to return to Myanmar where there is sporadic fighting," Sathorn said.

Bunlue, who runs a task force of 24 people set up to protect and monitor the movement of elephants, said the animals have been frightened out of the jungles by recent offensives by the Yangon military against minority groups in that country.

Border fights lead to exodus "the population of wild elephants in the area has increased rapidly and tripled last year after Myanmar troops pushed Karen

refugees to the border and stationed troops there," he said.

Three years ago there were 32 wild elephants known to be in the area. But since early 1998, when fighting erupted on the border, the number of elephants has grown to 107, intensifying the conflict between the wild animals and farmers.

As daylight breaks, the elephants disappear into dense jungle beneath the surrounding hills and rest there away from the fierce heat of the sun.

But the elephants reemerge under cover of darkness and it is normal in the evening to hear the distant sound of firecrackers and firebombs as farmers and villagers try to drive them away.

Now the environmentalists are attempting to establish a food buffer zone between the elephants and the farms.

The forest department has expropriated 5,000 hectares of land from local farmers and has begun to grow wild banana, bamboo, pineapple and other trees that elephants like to eat.

The first phase of the project, costing 10 million baht, (\$263,000) is being financed by a grant from a royal project group. Another 30 million baht is expected from the state-run Petroleum Authority of Thailand in the next few weeks.

Environmentalists have already dug several deep water holes to conserve water for the elephants to drink and bathe in during the dry season and the animals have begun to use them.

Regular dumping of food will continue until the end of the dry season in the middle of the year when food and water in the jungles should improve.

"The combined efforts of the military, forest department and private sectors are working together to implement the king's initiative, and I am confident the scheme will resolve the problem in the long run," Bunlue said.

Study warns of danger in volcano ash

By Michael Kahn
Reuters

SCIENTISTS WORKING on the Caribbean island of Montserrat said on Thursday that ash from volcanic eruptions is more dangerous than they thought although new research has found better ways to predict explosions.

Two separate studies of the Soufriere Hills Volcano provide new information helpful in reducing risks for people living near similar types of active volcanoes around the world.

"Understanding this kind of potentially explosive volcano is of concern because of the large populations worldwide that live on volcano flanks," said Barry Voight, a geoscientist at Penn State University who led one of the studies.

The sporadic eruptions on Montserrat, which began in 1995, have blanketed the teardrop-shaped, 62 sq km British colony with ash and caused the evacuation of the southern part of the island.

Although residents moved away from the volcano, one team of researchers said people on the island could still be at long-term risk of silicosis, a disease caused by tiny particles in the lungs blocking the supply of oxygen to the blood. The cause in this case — tiny particles in the ash.

"Ash formed in the eruption of the Soufriere Hills Volcano contained significant amounts of respirable particles and large amounts of cristobalite," the researchers wrote in the journal sci-

ence. Cristobalite, a silicon-based mineral, can break down into very fine, lung-clogging particles.

Researchers were previously unaware of the potential long-term health risks from ash, even long after the eruption.

Because the fine ash from lava dome eruptions initially drops in clusters, like snowflakes clumped together, driving a car or sweeping the porch can break up the tiny particles and send them back into the air.

"The period after the eruption might not seem like the most dangerous, especially because you can't actually see the ash suspended in the air," Stephen Sparks of Bristol University in Britain, who worked on the study, said in a statement.

Volcanic eruptions produce ash in two different ways. In one, magma squeezes out from a vent in the volcano, creating a giant lava dome. When the dome becomes too steep, it collapses and disintegrates to form an ash plume that rises and spreads.

A second type occurs when the volcano explodes violently, sending up a plume that also disperses ash.

These more powerful explosions produce ash with two to five times lower levels of the harmful particles than do the collapses of the lava domes, the researchers said.

"The ash causes a health risk from long-term exposure, not short-term," Voight said. "That is quite different than the immediate danger from a superheated ash hurricane in an actual explo-

sive eruption that would be capable of roasting anyone in its path within minutes." Study of the Soufriere Hills Volcano has also helped scientists better predict when eruptions of various kinds are likely to occur, including the dome-collapse and vertical explosions, Voight said in a telephone interview.

This can help spare nearby residents from the immediate dangers of volcanic eruption, although they still face long-term risks from ash exposure when they return home. A massive eruption of the Montserrat Volcano in 1997 killed 19 people, many of them farmers working land on its slopes.

Both volcano types can produce dangerous ash hurricanes, similar to those that buried Pompeii in what is now Italy in 79 AD, and wiped out the city of St. Pierre on Martinique at the turn of the century, killing about 30,000 people, Voight said.

Many of the critical eruptions on Montserrat occurred at just the right time for Voight's team, when they had instruments in place to monitor quakes and ground movements.

"We were able to document eruptions right from the beginning," he said.

They were able to establish a pattern of cycles for the volcano, allowing them to accurately forecast the eruptions.

They also discovered a certain type of earthquake would occur in clusters just before an eruption, which provided an additional tool in detecting when the volcano would explode.

Islamic countries to share experience to help economy

DHAKA (R) — Leaders of eight developing Islamic countries vowed Monday to share experience and expertise to boost economic development in the next Millennium.

"We would seek a better destiny for our peoples by harnessing our resources and exploiting our potentials," said Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the host of the two-day summit of the so-called D-8 group.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Iranian First Vice-President Hassan Ahlbi are key leaders attending the summit which aims to boost economic relations and cooperation in a number of other fields.

Other countries in the group, Indonesia, Nigeria

and Egypt, are being represented by ministers and high officials.

Hasina said the promotion of trade among the D-8 countries would benefit their economies. "The private sector must be integrated with D-8 processes as soon as possible."

She said the group should develop safeguards against the kind of economic crises that has rocked some Asian nations.

Mahathir said the Muslim World had no dearth of skilled and educated people but they were often employed elsewhere, and should be brought back to rebuild their countries.

"They can help us rebuild our nations, catch up with the rest of the world."

Mahathir lashed out at rich nations, saying they were exploiting the untapped resources of the poor in the name of global-

isation.

"We are really ill-prepared to cope with the threats that we face," he told the summit.

"When we agreed to globalisation we thought that we would be able to share the wealth and the technology of the rich. But the rich are really thinking about how globalisation should coalesce them to exploit the untapped resources of the poor, using their huge capital and sophisticated technology," he said.

The Malaysian leader has often blamed foreign currency speculators and financiers for plunging his country into its first recession in 13 years.

Ministers and foreign ministry officials on Sunday drafted a declaration for adoption by the summit on Tuesday. They said the declaration envisaged greater cooperation among

the member countries in commerce, environment, health, poverty alleviation, telecommunications, science and technology, agriculture and micro-credit.

Sharif called for the sharing of technology and elimination of protectionism.

"The industrialised economies must realise that affluence has to be broad-based. An island of prosperity cannot sustain itself in an ocean of poverty," Sharif said.

Demirel said the member nations would begin talks at various levels to identify fields of cooperation.

"I am confident that such consultations and cooperation within the framework of D-8 will facilitate also our individual contributions towards shaping institutional and financial reforms in the global economy," he said.

Pact liberalising financial services takes effect

GENEVA (AFP) — An agreement marking a turning point in liberalisation of trade in financial services took effect Monday more than a year after 71 countries agreed to the deal at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The pact widens market access in banking, insurance and fund management in countries representing 95 per cent of all global financial activity.

Participants promise it will boost investment in emerging economies including those of hard-hit Asia, bring crucial advances in technology to inefficient firms and give consumers a better deal.

WTO Director General Renato Ruggiero has stressed the accord was not aimed at liberalising capital flows but at creating opportunities for businesses to establish thresholds and expand overseas.

The size of the financial service sector has exploded in the last decade. About \$1.5 trillion are traded daily in the foreign exchange markets and total banking assets are estimated at more than \$20 trillion, and insurance premiums at \$2 trillion.

Some 53 governments have ratified the pact, including those of the United States, Japan, and all but one of the European Union (EU) states.

Seventeen governments among the 71 signatory parties, among which is the European Commission, have still not completed the necessary domestic procedures.

These countries are expected to come on board before a ratifying deadline of June 15, 1999, which replaced an original cut-off date of Jan. 29.

Most Asian countries who joined the pact have ratified the protocol, including Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea.

The Philippines is the one notable Asian country still outstanding. Australia, Brazil, Luxembourg and Costa Rica are also among the have-nots.

Though committed to carry out their liberalisation commitments, countries who have not ratified cannot be judged by the WTO's dispute settlement machinery from Monday.

The deal, struck after nine months of tough

negotiations in December 1997, liberalises key domestic financial sectors to varying degrees and with differing time frames.

As the United States is already the world's most open banking and insurance market, Washington pressed hard to secure more concessions for its financial services industry.

mainly from previously fast-growing economies in Asia.

U.S. negotiators insisted that serious commitments from these countries would reassure investors who had fled the region when the currency and stockmarket turmoil first started in July 1997.

"At a time of instability in global financial markets, this agreement provides a solid foundation for improvement of financial practices, for enlarging the pool of capital to businesses and consumers, and for increasing the transparency of financial operations around the world," Ruggiero said recently.

Indian finance minister blames predecessors for belt-tightening budget

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Years of economic misrule by Indian governments have led to an increasingly unmanageable fiscal deficit, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha said in remarks published Monday.

"If we had managed our house better, if we had kept our finances under control, then the situation would have not arisen. For two decades now, we have lived with an unsustainable fiscal deficit. Now this cannot be corrected in a day, in a year," he said in an interview to the Business Standard newspaper.

Sinha on Saturday presented a budget aimed at slashing the fiscal deficit from around 6.5 per cent of gross domestic product — well in excess of the budgeted target of 5.6 per cent for fiscal 1998-99 — and targeting economic growth of between 6.5 and 7.0 per cent during the year beginning April 1.

He raised personal income tax by 10 per cent, imposed a surcharge of 10 per cent on corporate tax and increased import duties on almost all items.

Sinha said that by "compressing expenditure" and raising taxes, he "should be able to completely eliminate our revenue deficit and fis-

cal deficit to less than two per cent."

"I am aware of the problem and I can assure you that I'll work for restraining fiscal deficit," he said.

In a separate interview to the economic times daily, Sinha said he was confident his second budget would trigger an economic recovery, stem a continuing industrial slowdown and spur demand.

"The budget sharply focuses on the revival of the rural economy. The bulk of the demand comes from the rural sector. It must be noted that even in these times of industrial slowdown, the companies that cater to rural demand have done well," he indicated.

"Rural demand is the key and therefore has been a key factor in this budget. This to my mind will be the first stimulus for growth," he said.

The minister said two other measures would also help.

"I have given a very substantial package to the housing sector, both in rural and urban areas... It will be possible for private builders to come forward and give a boost to housing activity," he said referring to tax holidays and a slew of other concessions.

Bank of Israel faults treasury's deficit policy

TEL AVIV (R) — The Bank of Israel Monday took issue with the government's methods for calculating and funding its 1998 budget deficit.

The Bank of Israel, in a statement, faulted the treasury for using the "real profits" of the Bank of Israel earned last year towards covering a large part of the government's deficit, saying the profits did not reflect actual earnings.

The treasury said in a separate announcement that the Bank of Israel's statement was incorrect and misleading.

The government previously said it was able to meet its legally mandated 1998 deficit target of 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product thanks to the Bank of Israel's profits.

But the Bank of Israel said: "There is no correlation between booking the Bank of Israel's 'real profits' as revenues in the government's budget and the actual transfer of the Bank of Israel's surplus profits to the government."

Although a 1990 agreement between the treasury and central bank allows the ministry to use the profits, the bank said the understanding was no longer appropriate.

It said the procedure for recording interest on the

Bank of Israel's foreign exchange balances as earnings in the budget was flawed since the government did not similarly deduct expenditures for bank deposits in the central bank.

The Bank of Israel said the flawed accounting procedure led to a sharp gap between the amount of money the government raised and the deficit.

The treasury raised 12 billion shekels (\$3.0 billion) in 1998, which was 4.8 billion shekels in excess of the government's 7.2 billion shekel deficit for the year.

The central bank warned that surplus fund-raising would hurt the economy, saying: "An excess of government fund-raising causes superfluous growth in the government's debt and imposes a burden on interest rate payments."

When its profits were deducted from the government deficit, excess fund-raising was reduced to one billion shekels.

The Israeli government last year raised 5.1 billion shekels through its privatisation programme, 4.5 billion shekels through the auction of tradeable and non-tradeable debt and 2.4 billion shekels in overseas fund-raising, the central bank said.

Exchange Rates Monday, 01-03-99									
	US DOLLAR	EURO	YEN	DM	FRANK	SCANDINAVIAN	AFRICAN	ASIAN	AMERICAN
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1897	0.1927	1.8778	1.8388	0.1944	2.3152	0.2077	0.7080
LIBAN LIRA	5.2000	1.0000	1.0211	0.9504	0.9444	1.0303	12.2685	1.1009	3.7517
SAUDI RIYAL	5.1893	0.9793	1.0000	0.7443	0.7443	1.0089	12.0144	1.0781	3.6740
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5326	0.1005	0.1029	1.0000	0.9793	1.0303	1.2434	1.1108	3.3770
QATAR RIYAL	0.5436	0.1026	0.1048	1.0211	1.0000	1.0303	1.2434	1.1108	3.3770
QATAR RIYAL	5.1434	0.9708	0.9912	0.9881	0.9881	1.0000	11.9081	1.0885	3.6415
KUWAIT DINAR	0.4319	0.0815	0.0832	0.8111	0.7943	0.0840	1.0000	0.0897	0.3058
NETHERLAND GILDER	4.8136	0.9084	0.9276	0.9388	0.9388	0.9359	11.1448	1.0000	3.4080
LIBAN LIRA	21.4831	4.0542	4.1389	40.3405	39.5056	4.1769	49.7384	4.4650	15.2101
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2665	0.2722	2.6522	2.5973	0.2746	3.2701	0.2894	1.0000
EURO	0.6833	0.1087	0.1102	1.0587	1.0243	0.1177	1.4041	0.1183	0.8254
YEN	2.5106	0.4738	0.4838	4.7144	4.6128	0.4881	5.8126	0.5216	1.7775
FRANK	2.0498	0.3982	0.4044	3.9451	3.7638	0.3979	4.7384	0.4282	1.4490
SCANDINAVIAN	8.4188	1.5889	1.6226	15.8105	15.4832	1.5938	19.4938	1.7492	5.9612
AFRICAN	1.6850	0.3180	0.3247	3.1841	3.0986	0.3276	3.9012	0.3501	1.1930
HOLLAND GILDER	2.6287	0.5338	0.5451	5.3116	5.2017	0.5500	6.5481	0.5879	2.0027
NETHERLAND KRONA	11.5986	2.1813	2.2274	21.7046	21.2553	2.2473	26.7810	2.4013	8.1833
ITALY LIRA	24.8545	4.8004	4.7806	48.9714	48.7053	4.8323	57.5441	5.1534	17.5870
NETHERLAND LIRA	51.7834	9.7723	9.7718	97.2381	96.2252	10.0580	119.8309	10.7576	36.6828
NETHERLAND LIRA	2.2743	0.4538	0.4587	4.2744	4.1892	0.4426	5.2701	0.4729	1.6118
NETHERLAND LIRA	4.1328	0.7793	0.7894	7.7899	7.5893	0.8035	9.5677	0.8585	2.9225
CYPRUS POUND	0.7281	0.1374	0.1403	1.3871	1.3388	0.1416	1.6856	0.1513	0.5155
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.8821	3.3331	3.4036	33.1857	32.4792	3.4340	40.8621	3.6982	12.5048
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1306	0.4021	0.4106	4.0072	3.9183	0.4143	4.8533	0.4427	1.5086
EURO	1.2632	0.2422	0.2473	2.4098	2.3597	0.2495	2.9709	0.2656	0.9085

Major Currencies Against Jordan Dinar									
	US DOLLAR	EURO	YEN	DM	FRANK	SCANDINAVIAN	AFRICAN	ASIAN	AMERICAN
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.5626	0.8501	0.1878	0.2382	0.4993	5.8826	1.1007	3.7517
EURO	0.6254	1.0000	0.5518	0.4316	0.5242	0.3123	3.5540	0.8584	2.9225
YEN	1.7775	2.8422	1.0000	1.2267	0.2882	1.4899	18.0776	10.1012	33.8125
DM	1.4480	2.3170	0.8152	1.0000	0.2431	1.2148	14.7235	7.2544	23.8448
FRANK	0.9812	0.5520	0.3597	0.4140	1.0000	0.4969	5.9596	3.8782	12.5048
SCANDINAVIAN	119.3000	150.7607	67.1167	82.3526	20.0127	1.0000	59.5896	67.9589	131.3125
AFRICAN	2.0027	3.2923	1.1287	1.3521	0.3360	0.1687	1.0000	11.3808	2.2044
ASIAN	8.1833	13.0454	4.6038	5.8477	1.3726	0.6596	4.0622	46.5051	9.0078
AMERICAN	17.5870	28.1378	9.8899	12.1442	2.9519	1.6789	1.0000	10.3890	33.8125
NETHERLAND KRONA	36.6828	58.6236	20.620	25.3020	6.1502	30.713	18.3008	208.3460	40.3548
NETHERLAND LIRA	1.6118	2.5770	0.9087	1.1122	0.2703	0.3509	0.6047	9.1584	1.7789
NETHERLAND LIRA	2.9225	4.6784	1.6400	2.0192	0.4308	0.4205	1.4609	19.9287	3.2204
NETHERLAND LIRA	0.5155	0.8422	0.2850	0.3527	0.0885	0.4321	0.2574	2.5982	0.6474
NETHERLAND LIRA	12.5048	19.8620	7.0550	8.6300	2.0577	10.4818	6.2440	71.0521	13.7640
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5086	2.4123	0.8487	1.0411	0.2531	1.2845	0.7533	9.1871	1.6605
EURO	0.9085	1.5277	0.5111	0.6270	0.1524	0.7815	0.4538	5.1920	1.0000

Central Bank Bulletin									
	US DOLLAR	EURO	YEN	DM	FRANK	SCANDINAVIAN	AFRICAN	ASIAN	AMERICAN
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.5626	0.8501	0.1878	0.2382	0.4993	5.8826	1.1007	3.7517
EURO	0.6254	1.0000	0.5518	0.4316	0.5242	0.3123	3.5540	0.8584	2.9225
YEN	1.7775	2.8422	1.0000	1.2267	0.2882	1.4899	18.0776	10.1012	33.8125
DM	1.4480	2.3170	0.8152	1.0000	0.2431	1.2148	14.7235	7.2544	23.8448
FRANK	0.9812	0.5520	0.3597	0.4140	1.0000	0.4969	5.9596	3.8782	12.5048
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EURO	0.9085	1.5277	0.5111	0.6270	0.1524	0.7815	0.4538	5.1920	1.0000

World Stock Markets									
	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE					
FRANKFURT	DAX	4911.81	4958.08	+46.77	METAL	ASK	BID		
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	9658.49	9658.07	-20.42	GOLD	287.15	287.40		
LONDON	FT-SE 100	6206.50	6207.60	+10.10	SILVER	5.67	5.65		
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSTRIAL	9305.58	9306.34	+78.76	PLATINUM	377.50	378.50		
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	596.46	597.43	+9.97					
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	590.24	592.47	+2.23					
NEW YORK	NYSE 300	1258.35	1258.35	-0.00					
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	14221.76	14307.54	+85.78					
PARIS	CAC 40	4082.94	4102.95	+20.01					

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- "M*A*S*H" star
- Port of Iraq
- Ireland
- Marsh grass
- Messages on the computer
- Unclashed
- Curler and
- Branch hand
- Show on TV
- Friends
- Buoyed up?
- This is the Netherlands
- Lulu
- Prentiss and Abdul
- Regional languages
- Musical Home
- Singer Steve
- Gilbert of "Roseanne"
- Creative skill
- Payable
- Running game
- Stadium level
- Yogi of baseball
- Irish Rose's love
- Peacefully
- Skid-slope
- mountain
- 1998 election loser
- Stalk of asparagus
- 1998 winner of two golf majors
- Last of a gang?
- Wedge-shaped device
- Animal warden
- French pronoun
- Part of Q.E.D.
- Banishment
- Banister
- Cincinnati nine
- FDR's money?
- Square measure

DOWN

- Diva's song
- Son of Jacob
- DeNiro-Streep film, with "The"
- Went
- 5-Since
- Substitute for soap
- Adages
- Grave letters
- Female grade
- Additional
- performance
- German river
- fine (obscenity)
- Socially inept loser
- Christmas card
- Org. of Couples and Love
- Pie mode
- Edmonton hockey player
- Builder's maps
- Eagle's home
- Advice and Consent
- author
- Second-story men
- Bring up the rear
- Men of wisdom
- Astaire's sister
- Edits
- Tardy
- Current units
- Turkish title
- "You've Got Mail" director
- Ephron
- the ramblers
- Engraved stone
- Neisse line
- Additional
- Zouk
- Levelling device
- Neatness of tennis
- Actor Lugosi
- 58 111
- Period

Peanuts

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'D LIKE TO BUY SOME HAND-DRAWN VALENTINES, WOULD YOU?

SEE? THEY HAVE BIG RED HEARTS ON THEM.

DOGS DON'T GIVE VALENTINES.

WE'LL TAKE THEM, BUT WE DON'T GIVE THEM.

Andy Capp

COOEE! FLO!

YOUR DAUGHTER'S NOT IN, MISSUS. SHE'S HAD A WASTED JOURNEY.

A BIT LIKE YOUR LIFE, ISN'T IT? HEY HEY HEY!

I FIND SHE GOES AWAY QUICKER IF YOU ASK HER THE FEED-BAK AND LET HER GET ON WITH IT.

Mutt'n' Jeff

Friday, March 2, 1999

Financial
Effect

Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Tuesday, March 2, 1999 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

'Any aid that comes to Jordan and not used adequately is a new waste'

**** COMMENTING ON** the recent announcements of aid to the Kingdom, Mazen Marji said it is too early to judge the effect of such aid on improving the economic situation in the country because "all what we have heard was promises and pledges without disclosing the amounts or the type of aid." Marji, an economic expert, expected various forms of assistance and not only direct cash injection.

Marji said: "We hope that the aid, in the first place, would include direct cash assistance and, secondly, tangible Arab investments that go beyond the levels recorded until now and in the past." He explained that the cash would consolidate the national reserve and the liquidity while investment would have a positive effect such as opening new employment opportunities, providing capital funds and boosting national production in various sectors and, consequently, increasing exports. "This aspect is very important especially through setting up joint projects or schemes wholly-owned by Arab investors as the Jordanian investment promotion law allows that."

From another side, the economic expert stressed the importance of opening work opportunities at the earliest possible time due to Jordan's dire need to find jobs for the huge number of unemployed, most of whom were originally working in the Arab Gulf states. He portrayed the Arab stand and participation in the funeral of His Majesty King Hussein as an indication of the wide and major support that consolidate the Jordanian ties with Arab Gulf countries.

With regard to foreign aid, Marji said the Jordanian government should seek to obtain the most of grants, and not loans,

from the countries that expressed readiness and willingness to assist the Kingdom, such as the United States and the European Union. "Loans in themselves are not considered a (form) of assistance but additional obligations that raise Jordan's indebtedness," he explained. He also called for seeking support by reducing the volume of debt through write offs of principals and high interests. Marji defended the cancellation of debt by stressing that Jordan walked the path of peace and, consequently, "maintaining the stability of Jordan is not only an interest for Jordan but an international demand and wish to keep the Kingdom a balancing and stabilising factor in the region as world leaders have said."

Marji valued the speedy U.S. initiative to increase aid to Jordan but expressed hope that the assistance would be real and directed to economic development and not just aid that is given by the right hand only to be taken back by the left. He clarified that Jordan obtained big aid and credits in the past but although large parts of them were manifested in economic growth and development, other major portions were wasted.

"Any aid that comes to Jordan and not used adequately is a new waste and will add burdens on Jordan and citizens," he stressed, emphasising the need to formulate plans and to optimise the use of aid, investments or loans to revive the economic situation in Jordan. "Among the priorities of planning should be the elimination of corruption and favouritism in addition to curbing the many hindrances facing advancement and development," he concluded (Al Dustour).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) The job is tough, but you can do it. Bring everything you've got, and then some. An old love of yours comes through for you in a pinch. Your mind is speeding up and that's a big help. Thank your team for their help and you'll get even more.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You'll notice your pace picking up for the next few weeks. Today, you'll be lucky to steal a long lunch hour, even if you give it top priority. Another person's sense of urgency is starting to rub off on you. Just use it to motivate yourself to move faster.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Choose a leader who's got the objective clearly in mind. You'll not only be more successful, you'll make your life a lot easier. Your best choice is one who consistently says what you want to hear, and does what he or she says. If you know somebody like that, give this person your support.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Don't spend much time daydreaming today. You don't want your boss or your teacher to catch you. People like that will tend to be short-tempered. Its not that they don't care about you. Its that they're more interested in results than lofty ideas.

LEO: (July 23 to August 21) You're getting smarter and that's good. You'll need all the brains you can get for the next few days. Conditions are unstable, to say the least. Nothing is predictable, except for one lucky break. Keep watching — it could show up anytime.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your ruling planet, Mercury, goes into Aries today, helping you think more quickly for the next few weeks. This is good, since you'll be under a bit of pressure. You'll need to focus your attention on other people's money, and that's always exciting. Relax. By the time you're done, more of their money could be your money.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A person who likes to order you around is getting kind of bossy again. Why is it that some people think they can tell you what to do? Do you look like you need somebody to make your decisions for you or what? Hmmm. Might be something to that. Think it over.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You'll be spending more attention on your work, but not necessarily more time. If you can focus, you'll become much more efficient. You're good at this game anyway, but this month you'll be awesome. Choose a tough game, like doubling your output in half the time. To make it even more exciting, tell somebody.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you play by the rules, you'll achieve your goals. So what will you do once you get there? You don't care about fame and fortune, so that's no reward. You need something more fun to look forward to, like a boat. Start thinking about it. Pick out a prize that excites you.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Although you're still clear headed, decisive and an excellent leader, you're starting to be more concerned about personal matters. Yes, it is time to begin delegating more of your responsibilities to other people. If you do, you'll have more time for yourself and the ones you love best.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Yours is one of the most intelligent signs in the zodiac, and you're about to get even smarter. Mercury, the planet symbolising the mind, is going into Aries, and that speeds up your wit as well as your decision making processes. Use this additional brain power to increase your financial security.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You could get the opportunity to make more money, and soon, but in order to act on it, you'll have to be careful. You'll also want to do the job perfectly, and that's where your neat freak friend comes in. Instead of avoiding a picky person, today take his or her advice. You'll profit by it.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Europe opens up power market

LONDON (R) — Europe's mainly state-controlled electricity industry began the long road to free competition this week as a European Union (EU) directive opening up one quarter of the continent's \$168 billion power market took effect.

The new rules allow large buyers from Denmark to Portugal to buy power wherever it is cheapest. The only exceptions are Ireland and Belgium, who have an extra year to comply, and Greece, which has two years.

The directive stipulates that 25 per cent of all EU customers, comprising those consuming more than 40 gigawatt hours of electricity a year, must be allowed to buy their supplies on the open market.

Analysts say the existing large variations in each country's degree of market openness mean the directive in itself will not change the power market overnight.

Britain, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Finland have taken liberalisation well beyond the EU guidelines.

But France and Italy are expected to miss the deadline and the European Union is unlikely to act against them, EU Energy Commissioner Christos Papoutsis said.

"The directive provides a framework within which to move towards a single European electricity market but it is far from the big bang liberalisation effort we have seen in other industries," Gill Rider, Andersen Consulting's managing partner for European Utilities said.

"Economic and technological realities are the more likely catalysts of a single European electricity market," he added.

Rider cited global pressure on utilities to reduce costs, an increasing tendency for companies to look in neighbouring countries for growth opportunities, smaller units of power generation allowing smaller players onto the market and new electricity trading markets as the main catalysts for change.

According to new research from Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 75 per cent of European electricity suppliers expect to face strong competition from foreign utilities.

"With competition set to be fierce it's critical the electricity companies get their strategies and systems in place," said Simon Allen, Pricewaterhouse Coopers' European head of utilities. "It's likely to be a painful procedure but the alternative is to do nothing and wait to be invaded," he added.

Friction is already emerging between EU member states over the Commission's apparent reluctance to lay down the law to all countries to the directive's line from the start.

Britain's Energy Minister John Birt warned that the European Commission must act against European Union states who do not comply with the EU's new rules.

"February marks the first milestone on the road to an open and competitive market across the whole of Europe," Birt said. "However, some countries lag behind and I expect the European Commission to ensure that member states comply with the basic requirements of the directive."

France's tardiness has angered representatives of the British and Irish power industry who said the delays will give French state-owned utility Electricite de France (edf) an unfair advantage.

"EDF shouldn't be able to compete abroad while the French market remains closed," one British industry official said.

But energy consultant Roger Gilt believes France will eventually have no alternative but to pass the directive into national law.

"People within the French utilities are quite keen on liberalisation because it gives them a chance to manage their business," he said. "The French will slowly bring in competition...but competition that they can win."

Russian financial crisis boosted mafia — expert

LONDON (R) — Russia's economic crisis boosted the mafia's power because its major players snapped up new businesses cheap and extended their criminal empires, a Russian analyst said Monday. He warned that the Russian gangs were spreading inexorably abroad as organised crime has proved to be a major growth industry since the Soviet Union's demise.

Mark Galeotti, director of the organised Russian and Eurasian crime research unit at Keele University, said the mafia gangs were disorganised and riven with internal rivalries.

But Galeotti, speaking at an international conference of criminal intelligence analysts, warned the mafia were deadly as flexible entrepreneurs who could thrive in the toughest political climates.

He said Russia's economic crisis helped the big players "to extend and rationalise their business holdings, snapping up new purchases at bargain-basement prices."

"They have also been able to extend their criminal empires, buying out impoverished smaller gangs," he added.

The collapse of communism and its police-state system created a vacuum that organised crime was quick to fill.

Through once strictly controlled frontiers along the iron curtain, gangs now smuggle drugs, weapons, people, nuclear material, and huge shipments of goods on which no duties have been paid.

Galeotti said the Russian mafia gangs lacked the efficiency of the Italian Cosa Nostra or the Japanese Yakuza but are "extremely flexible and responsive to the market."

The rise in organised crime in eastern and central Europe has caused alarm in the West, particularly in the United States where branches of some of the more successful Russian and Ukrainian mafia groups are already established.

Galeotti spoke of "hard penetration" in countries like Slovakia, Austria and Israel where they set up alongside or in competition with local gangs.

Next came "soft penetration" — establishing contact with local criminals in Italy, Spain and Japan.

Last was the provision of criminal services on a global scale, such as contract killing and cybercrime.

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Commodity	Open	High	Low	Close
BANKS				
ARAB BK	220.000	221.000	219.000	+0.45%
NTL BK	1.500	1.490	1.480	-0.67%
BL OF JORDAN	1.330	1.320	1.310	-0.75%
THE HOUSING BK	2.970	2.940	2.930	-1.05%
JO. GULF BK	0.680	0.650	0.640	-1.52%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.880	1.850	1.840	-0.58%
UNION BK	1.030	0.990	0.980	-3.88%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.530	0.530	0.530	0.00%

BANKS INDEX 228.030 point = +0.19%

Commodity	Open	High	Low	Close
INSURANCE				
JO. FRENCH INS	2.680	2.680	2.680	0.00%
HOLY LAND INS	1.100	1.100	1.100	0.00%

INSURANCE INDEX 125.280 point = 0.00%

Commodity	Open	High	Low	Close
SERVICES				
ELECTRIC POWER	1.710	1.650	1.640	-3.51%
IRSID ELECTRICITY	1.700	1.790	1.780	+5.29%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.00%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.250	0.240	0.230	-4.00%
AL-RAY	7.100	7.000	6.990	-1.41%
AL-ZARSA FOR EDU	0.910	0.900	0.890	-1.10%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.180	1.190	1.180	+0.85%

SERVICES INDEX 113.660 point = -0.92%

Commodity	Open	High	Low	Close
INDUSTRY				
CEMENT	3.650	3.650	3.650	0.00%
PHOSPHATE	2.350	2.320	2.310	-1.28%
ARAB POTASH	4.560	4.500	4.490	-1.48%
REFINERY	10.320	10.300	10.290	-0.19%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRIC	1.080	1.050	1.040	-2.78%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.080	3.050	3.040	-0.97%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.550	1.550	1.550	0.00%
RAPIA	0.530	0.510	0.500	-3.77%
DAK AL DAWA	8.120	8.110	8.100	-0.18%
MURTEL EAST COMPLEX	0.570	0.560	0.550	-1.75%
JO. STEEL	0.970	0.980	0.970	+1.03%
LIFE & ACCIDENT	1.840	1.800	1.790	-2.17%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.00%
NTL IND	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.00%
PETRO-CHEMICAL	0.300	0.290	0.280	-3.33%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.850	0.820	0.810	-3.53%
NTL CABLE	0.520	0.500	0.490	-3.85%
SULPHO-CHEMICALS	0.410	0.410	0.410	0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR	1.400	1.380	1.370	-1.43%
KAWTHIR	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.00%
EL-ZAY	1.280	1.280	1.280	0.00%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.00%
NEW CAPDES	0.590	0.570	0.560	-3.39%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.910	0.900	0.890	-1.23%

INDUSTRY INDEX 94.900 point = -0.57%

Commodity	Open	High	Low	Close
PARALLEL				
EXPORT BY 75%	0.920	0.950	0.940	+3.26%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.440	0.430	0.420	-2.27%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.880	0.880	0.880	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIO	0.900	0.890	0.880	-1.11%
AL-SHARQ	1.130	1.130	1.130	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.440	0.450	0.440	+2.27%
AL DAWLAT	0.580	0.580	0.580	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.060	1.060	1.060	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIO	0.410	0.390	0.380	-4.88%
CENTURY	1.170	1.190	1.180	+1.71%
NABCO	0.180	0.170	0.160	-5.56%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR 90%	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.00%
UNION TOBACCO	4.050	3.970	3.960	-1.98%
NTL CERAMIC	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.00%
NUTRI BAR	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.00%

GRAND INDEX 182.27 point = -0.15%

Rohm & Haas, Morton ink \$4.9 billion merger

PHILADELPHIA (R) — Rohm and Haas Co. has agreed to buy Morton International Inc., the world's leading maker of table salt, in a cash, stock and debt deal valued at \$4.9 billion.

Rohm and Haas said it will pay up to two-thirds of the price, or about \$3.1 billion, in cash and the remainder in stock and debt. The transaction positions Rohm & Haas as an international leader in specialty chemicals such as adhesives and lubricants, electronic materials and salt.

Morton, based in Chicago, is best known for its table salt. As a result of the takeover, Rohm and Haas said it would cut an undisclosed number of jobs.

Rohm and Haas said it agreed to pay \$37.125 in cash per share for up to 67 per cent of Morton's outstanding stock, and

exchange shares of its own stock worth \$37.125 for the remainder. The company also will assume \$268 million in debt.

The companies expect to complete the merger in the second quarter. Haas family interests, with about 39 per cent of Rohm and Haas shares, have indicated their support for the deal.

The company said the deal will be accounted for as a purchase. With combined annual revenues of about \$6.5 billion, it should add to earnings by the second year after completion of the transaction.

Rohm & Haas, which has cut its costs by \$140 million since 1995 and is seeking another \$50 million to \$60 million in cuts this year and next, said the combination with Morton is expected to cut annual costs by another \$200 million.

Egyptian trade fair to be held in Iran, first since 1979

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian trade fair is to be held in Iran in June, the first in 20 years, Egyptian officials have said.

A variety of Egyptian products will be on display at the fair from June 21-26, the MENA news agency quoted organiser Mohammad Said Saleh as saying.

"Iran is one of the most important Asian markets as well as a transit point for Egyptian products towards the Muslim nations of Central Asia," he said, adding that the fair would provide an opportunity for Iranian and Egyptian businessmen to discuss joint ventures.

Diplomatic relations between Iran and Egypt were severed in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution, but ties have improved over the past year with the exchange of official delegations.

An Egyptian parliamentary delegation flew to Iran in January for the first visit of its kind in 20 years.

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Agassi keeps his temper, Sampras his No. 1 ranking

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Andre Agassi will be on his best behaviour when he defends his title at the \$350,000 Franklin Templeton Classic starting Monday.

The venue in the desert is just like home for the Las Vegas American, and only a short plane ride from his Nevada base. The event at the sprawling hacienda-style Princess Resort in this posh enclave north of Phoenix will be the American's first ATP Tour tournament since being ejected from competition this month for swearing.

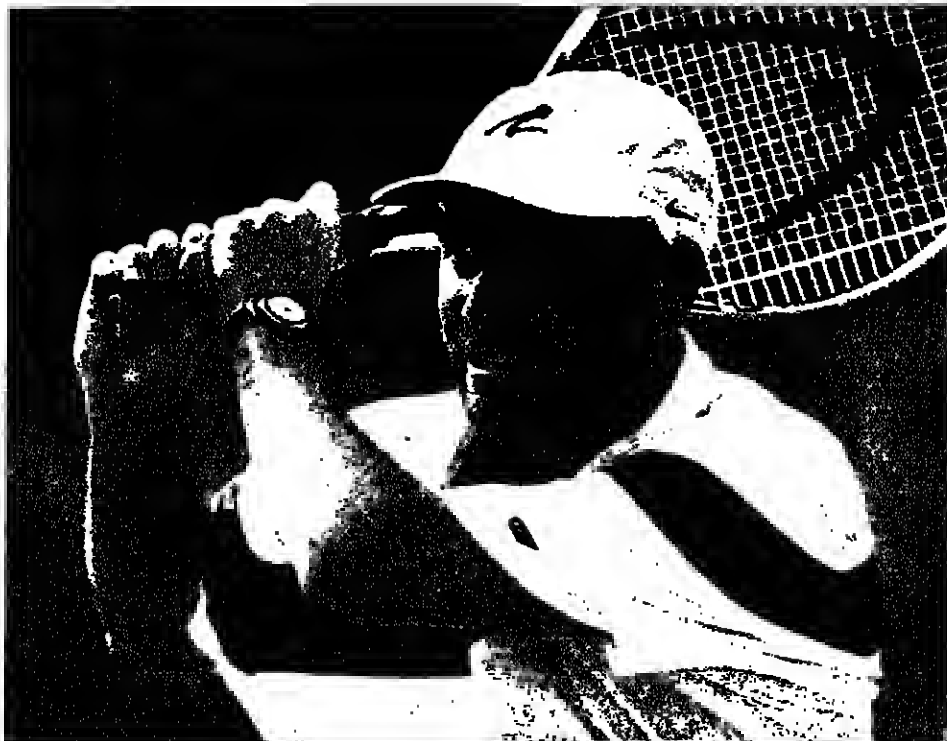
The volatile Agassi, eighth in the world, blew up at a linesman in San Jose and was chucked out under a controversial tour rule which may soon be softened.

Agassi hit the roof over some calls, and was warned twice before being defaulted in a second-round match. He said he was only swearing at himself. But it was an excuse which didn't cut any ice with supervisor Tom Barnes.

Tournament officials were agast that the letter of the law was applied, depriving them of their main draw-card.

A few days later their luck went from bad to worse when World No. 1 Pete Sampras couldn't play his semifinal because of a leg injury.

ATP Tour official Weller Evans said this month that the ATP may soon fall into line with women's tennis and the International Tennis Federation, which runs the Grand Slams and Davis Cup, and allow Tour super-



Andre Agassi

visors discretion on defaulting a player for a minor violations.

As it now stands, three violations in a row means automatic default.

Agassi got no sympathy from gentleman Sampras. "He knows the rules. Just because he's Andre, he's not going to get away with things like that. He learned his lesson, he knows he's a professional and he should act like one."

In Arizona, things should go much better for the 28-year-old showman, who is aiming for a fourth career title at the outdoor hard-court tournament.

Twelve months ago Agassi beat Australian Jason Stoltenberg for the

trophy to complete a hat-trick after winning in 1993 and 1994. Agassi's competition will be fearsome at the world series event, with Sampras and Pat Rafter both returning to the game with something to prove.

Rafter has not played in five weeks and he has said he is cutting back in 1999 schedule in order to conserve fitness and form.

"I'm really looking forward to this year," said Rafter. "I'm just going to have a lot more breaks than I did last year. It's just too hard to keep playing."

Sampras is still hanging on to his No. 1 ranking since Yevgeny Kafelnikov narrowly failed to overtake him when he lost in the

quarterfinals at London this week.

But only a handful of points separate the American and the Russian, with Kafelnikov resting this week.

The desert conditions in Scottsdale are just right for Agassi, whose return game benefits from the fast-moving balls in the thinner high-altitude air.

Also playing in the 32-man field are Australian Open finalist Thomas Enqvist, American Jim Courier, Frenchman Cedric Pioline, 1997 French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten, Austrian Thomas Muster and Germany's Australian Open semifinalist Tommy Haas.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Williams sisters rewrite books

PARIS (AFP) — Sisters Venus and Serena Williams of the United States rewrote the tennis history books on Sunday when they won separate tournaments. The 17-year-old Serena triumphed in the Paris Indoor Open, beating French hope Amelie Mauresmo 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4) and 18-year-old and fifth-ranked Venus beat Amanda Coetzer 6-4, 6-0 in Oklahoma. The last time two sisters contested different titles was in 1991 when Bulgarian sisters Manuela and Magdalena Maleeva reached separate finals. Both lost, however. Manuela was runner-up in Barcelona while Magdalena went down in Bol, Croatia.

Napoli fan loses eye in attack

BERGAMO (AFP) — A 27-year-old Napoli fan lost an eye here on Sunday after being hit in the face by a bottle thrown through the windscreen of his car by rival supporters. The car, with its two occupants, was stopped near the stadium and surrounded by a group of local Alalanta "ultras" before the kick-off of a Serie B match between the two sides. Michele Alloca was rushed to hospital after being hit by the bottle but surgery failed to save his left eye. A 25-year-old Alalanta fan with a police record was later arrested on charges of grievous bodily harm and is due to be interviewed by an investigating magistrate here on Monday. In a separate incident on Sunday, a group of about 100 Napoli fans being escorted by police from the railway station to the ground were hit by stones thrown by a group of Alalanta fans. Police arrested a number of the assailants, and later released them.

Rockets activate Barkley from injured list

HOUSTON (AFP) — Charles Barkley returned a week early from knee surgery, just in time to help the Houston Rockets against the Los Angeles Lakers in a nationally televised matchup of the NBA's glamour teams. Barkley did not start but entered the game early in the first quarter. His return gave the Rockets back their star-studded frontcourt that includes centre Hakeem Olajuwon and forward Scottie Pippen, all three of whom were voted among the National Basketball Association's 50 greatest players in 1996. On February 14, Barkley had arthroscopic surgery to have torn cartilage in his left knee repaired. He began rehabilitation immediately and was supposed to miss three weeks. After a vigorous 30-minute workout prior to Sunday's game, Barkley said he was ready to go and was activated from the injured list. To make room for Barkley on the roster, the Rockets placed forward Eddie Johnson on the injured list with a lower back strain.

Doctor calls for ban on headers outside penalty area

LONDON (AP) — A British doctor has called for a ban on heading the ball in all areas of the field except the penalty box to protect soccer players from possible brain damage.

David Kernick, a medical officer with Division Three club Exeter City, says evidence is mounting that heading the ball repeatedly can cause "mental decline," the British Journal of General Practice reported Monday. Kernick said it would be impossible to ban heading outright because it is an essential part of the game and "offers an important dimension of play, particularly around the goal-mouth." But he said in view of the millions of players throughout the world, if heading the ball caused even a slight amount of brain damage there

would be significant health consequences.

The Times newspaper cited evidence to back Kernick's claims, including brain scans conducted on Norwegian professionals which revealed elevated levels of neurophysiological impairment.

The English Football Association's medical committee has started its own long-term research into the issue and plans to monitor 15 apprentices during their careers, reviewing them every five years to see if heading the ball causes permanent damage.

Krajicek downs Rusedski

LONDON (AFP) — Holland's 1996 Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek won the battle of the big servers here on Sunday beating Briton and home favourite Greg Rusedski 7-6 (8/6), 6-7 (5/7), 7-5 in just over two hours to take the \$814,000 ATP Tour title.

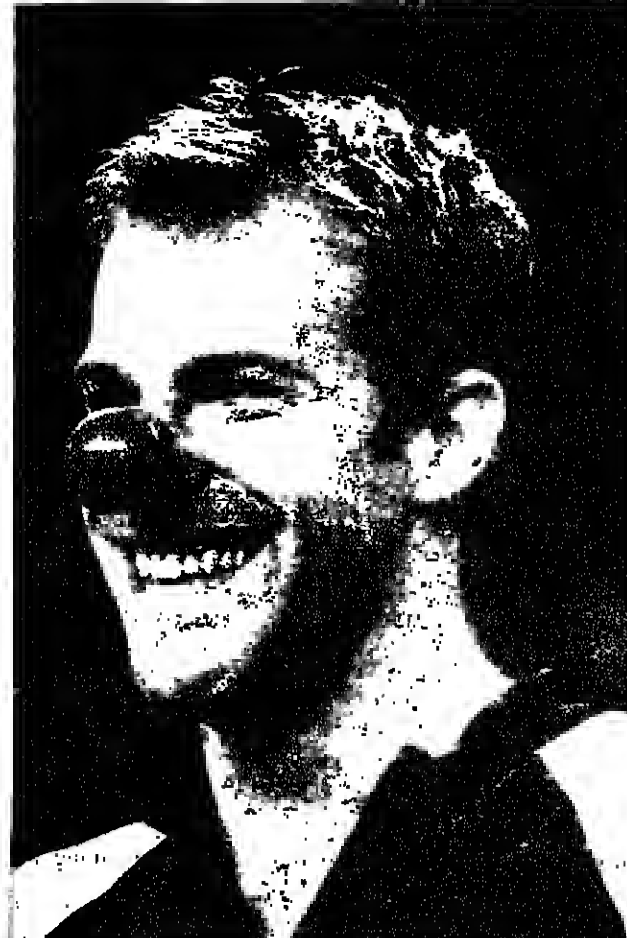
The 27-year-old Krajicek, who was seeded fourth, served 30 aces to Rusedski's 10 and took the match on the first of his three match points when the Briton sent a backhand return long.

"It's great to have got this one under my belt, particularly as its only my fourth tournament back after surgery and sets me up nicely for the outdoor season in America," Krajicek said.

It was Krajicek, who on Saturday had attended the funeral of his friend and former top doubles player Menno Oosting in Holland, who broke the monotony of games going with serve by breaking Rusedski, appearing in his first final of the year, in the third game of the final set.

Rusedski managed to save two break points but gifted Krajicek a third opportunity when he failed to put away a simple overhead and this time a backhand winner across court gave Krajicek the vital advantage.

Rusedski, seeded three, allowed his frustration to get to him and handed his racket to a ballgirl to face Krajicek's booming serves, although this worked to the Canadian-born Briton's advantage as once the game proper restarted he immediately broke back on the second of two break points.



Britain's Greg Rusedski joins in the fun of the occasion wearing his Comic Relief Red Nose, before his Guardian Direct Cup final with Dutchman Richard Krajicek at Battersea in London (AFP photo)

accepting that he had been bested by the better player.

"Now I know what its like to play against myself when I'm serving well!" Rusedski said.

"Richard was unbelievable his serves were phenomenal and deserved to win because he was the better player today," he added.

Rusedski was not too downhearted afterwards

Sampras, Kafelnikov top ATP rankings

PARIS (AFP) — Leading ATP men's tennis rankings issued here Monday:

1. Pete Sampras (USA)	3449 Pts
2. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus)	3382
3. Alex Corretja (Spa)	3250
4. Carlos Moya (Spa)	3234
5. Patrick Rafter (Aus)	3138
6. Marcelo Rios (Chi)	2880
7. Tim Henman (Gbr)	2764
8. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	2702
9. Andre Agassi (USA)	2583
10. Greg Rusedski (Ghr)	2439
11. Todd Martin (USA)	2201
12. Karol Kucera (Svk)	2160
13. Thomas Enqvist (Swe)	1930
14. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	1916
15. Albert Costa (Spa)	1817
16. Thomas Johansson (Swe)	1784
17. Mark Philippoussis (Aus)	1719
18. Tommy Haas (Ger)	1696
19. Felix Mantilla (Spa)	1522
20. Cedric Pioline (Fra)	1501
21. Jan Siemerink (Ned)	1474
22. Thomas Muster (Aut)	1468
23. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra)	1461
24. Francisco Clavet (Spa)	1272
25. Wayne Ferreira (Rsa)	1247
26. Marc Rosset (Svi)	1197
27. Jason Stoltenberg (Aus)	1194
28. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	1167
29. Ulihrach Bohdan (Cze)	1158
30. Marat Safin (Rus)	1148



Pete Sampras



Alex Corretja



Arsenal's Marc Overmars (L) and Newcastle United's Steve Howey (R) clash during their FA Carling Premiership match at St. James' Park stadium, which ended in a 1-1 draw (AFP photo)

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	RONIN	G.I. JANE	AL ZA'EEM	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	DR. DOLITTLE	THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY	CLOSED
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:30, 9:45	CONCORDE '2' FEAR	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



205 Qataris in Al Hussein Games

AMMAN — Qatar has affirmed its participation in the 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Games), to be held here Aug. 15-31, and submitted a list of the 205 Qatari players who will take part in the event. Saud Ben Ali Al Thani, secretary general of Qatar's Olympic Committee, said the players will participate in tennis, swimming, athletics, wrestling, Roman wrestling, taekwondo, judo, weightlifting, shooting, chess, equestrian, karate, basketball, volleyball, soccer, handball and boxing. Qatar, which will only participate in men's games, is the 12th country that confirmed participation in the Games alongside Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen. Other countries, including Palestine, Oman, Lebanon are still awaiting their sports federation's final decision on the nature of their participation.

Taekwondo championship to be held March 18-19

AMMAN — Marking the 40-day mourning period of the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein, Jordan's Champions Centre for Taekwondo will organise the First Amman International Championship, which will be held at the Palace of Sports March 18-19. Men and women's teams from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Chinese Taipei, Palestine, Qatar and Egypt will take part in the event, which will be broadcast live by Jordan Television. International referees from Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Cyprus, Kuwait and Hong Kong will be officiating the matches.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

NBA STANDINGS

By the Associated Press
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	PCT	GB
Orlando	10	4	.714	
Miami	9	4	.692	1-2
New York	8	5	.615	1 1-2
Philadelphia	8	5	.615	1 1-2
Boston	6	5	.545	2 1-2
Washington	4	7	.364	4 1-2
New Jersey	2	10	.167	7

Central Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Indiana	9	4	.692	
Atlanta	8	5	.615	1
Detroit	8	6	.571	1 1-2
Milwaukee	6	5	.545	2
Cleveland	5	6	.455	3
Toronto	4	8	.333	4 1-2
Chicago	4	10	.286	5 1-2
Charlotte	2	9	.182	6

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Utah	11	2	.846	
Minnesota	8	5	.615	3
Houston	8	6	.571	3 1-2
San Antonio	6	8	.429	5 1-2
Denver	5	9	.357	6 1-2
Dallas	5	10	.333	7
Vancouver	4	9	.308	7

Pacific Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Portland	9	3	.750	
Seattle	8	4	.667	1
Phoenix	8	5	.615	1 1-2
L.A. Lakers	9	6	.600	1 1-2
Golden State	6	7	.462	3 1-2
Sacramento	6	7	.462	3 1-2
L.A. Clippers	0	12	.000	9

Jazz upset Spurs; Lakers beat Rockets

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Karl Malone scored 30 points and Utah maintained its league dominance with a 101-87 victory Sunday over the inconsistent San Antonio Spurs.

Malone scored 17 of his points in the first two quarters, pushing Utah to a 14-point halftime lead that the Spurs couldn't overcome despite 21 points and 13 rebounds from Tim Duncan. Jeff Hornacek added 18 points for the Jazz, while John Stockton scored 14 points and had 10 assists.

In Milwaukee, Allen Iverson overcame a slow start Sunday with 25 points and Larry Hughes added 17 as Philadelphia won its fourth straight 87-76.

Iverson, the NBA's leading scorer, missed 10 of his first 13 shots and the 76ers gave up 13 straight points to trail 13-4 after six minutes. He finished 8-for-24 from the field and 9-of-11 on free throws.

Matt Geiger added 16 points for the 76ers, who led by as many as 17 in the fourth quarter.

Ray Allen led the Bucks with 16 points.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Joe Dumars continued his hot streak with 21 points to lead the Detroit Pistons to a 94-88 victory.

The Pistons are now 4-0 since Dumars, playing in his 14th and final season, returned to the lineup from a hamstring injury. He is averaging 20.5 points and four assists in the winning streak.

Lindsey Hunter added 16 points for the Pistons, while Jerry Stackhouse scored 13 off the bench. Allan Houston led the Knicks with 13, while Larry Johnson scored 12 — but only two after the first quarter.

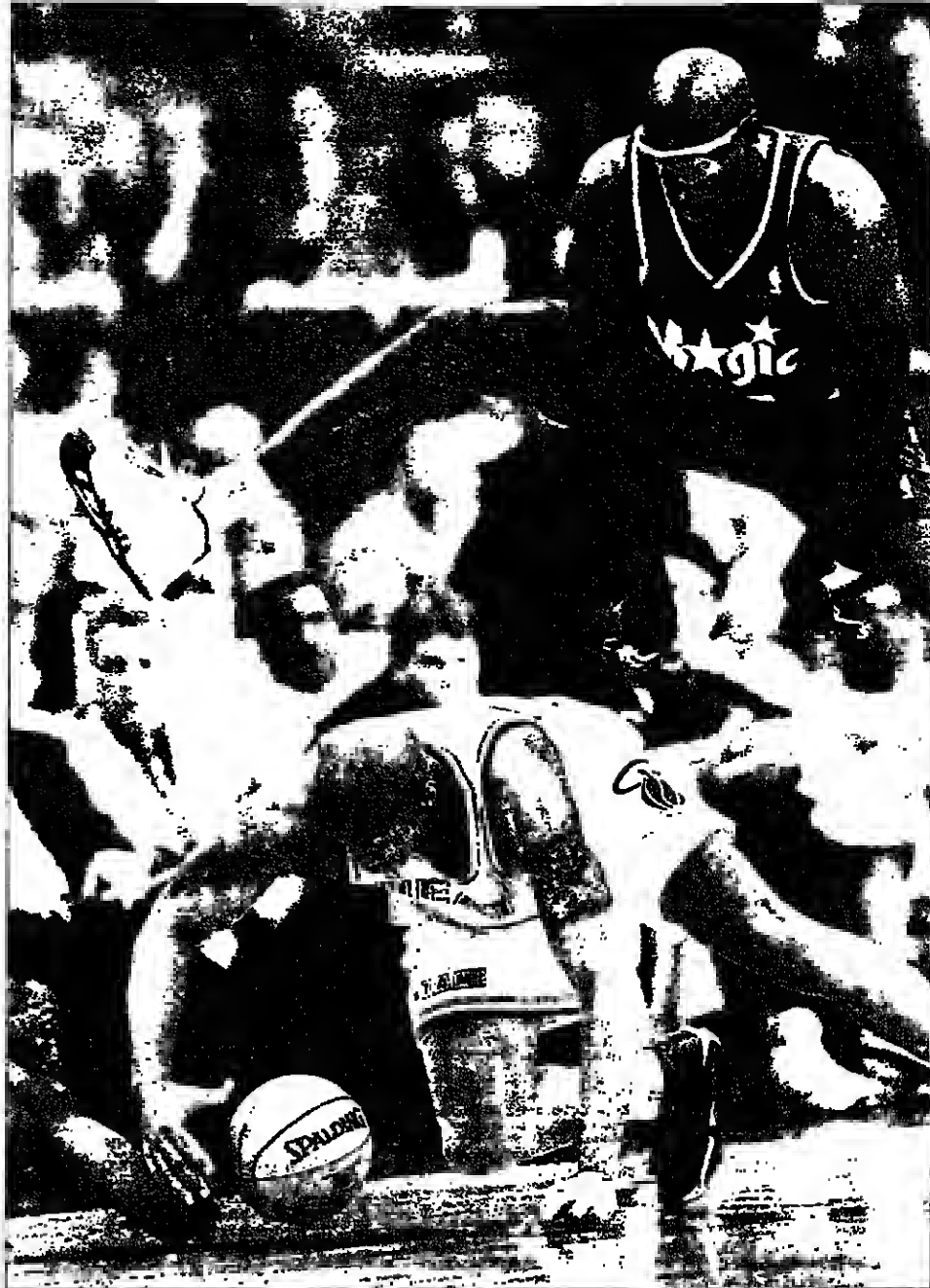
In Miami, P.J. Brown hit a 12-foot jumper with 13.4 seconds to play and then added a key steal as injury-depleted Miami overcame a 20-point deficit to win 84-78.

Alonzo Mourning paced Miami with 24 points, despite hitting just five of 20 from the field. Nick Anderson led Orlando with 25.

The Heat played without three starters, including point guard Tim Hardaway, who hyper extended his right knee in Friday's 95-93 loss to the Pistons in Detroit. Voshon Lenard and Jamal Mashburn were also out as Miami won for the eighth time in nine games.

In Inglewood, California, with Michael Jordan watching from the sidelines, Dennis Rodman's energy and Rick Fox's big fourth quarter helped Los Angeles beat Scottie Pippen and the Houston Rockets for the Lakers' first win in four nationally televised Sunday games this season.

Rodman, playing 26 minutes in his second game for



The Orlando Magic's forward Horace Grant jumps over the Miami Heat guard Blue Evans as Evans and Magic forward Anfernee Hardaway (L) go for a loose ball during third period action of their game at the Miami Arena. The Heat won 84-78 (AP photo)

the Lakers, had two points, 10 rebounds and two assists in addition to playing effective defence as Los Angeles raised its record to 2-0 since Kurt Rambis was appointed head coach.

Fox, who didn't play in the first half, scored 15 of his 21 points in the first 6:55 of the fourth quarter to spark a 19-8 run that gave the Lakers a 96-80 lead — the biggest of the game for either team to that stage.

Fox, who played 19 minutes, made all seven of his field goal attempts — including five from 3-point range.

In Minneapolis, Rasheed Wallace made his first six shots en route to a season-high 22 points as Portland banded Minnesota's first homecourt loss of the season 100-93.

Wallace, who was starting for just the third time this season, shot 10-of-14 and added six assists before fouling out with 2:03 to play. Portland improved to 9-3, the best record in the Pacific Division.

Isaiah Rider, who missed Saturday's game due to a league-imposed suspension, added 17 points for the Blazers as Portland wrapped up a series of three road games in as many

nights with back-to-back victories.

Stephon Marbury had 25 points and 16 assists for the Wolves, who saw their club-record 12-game home winning streak come to an end.

In Phoenix, Cliff Robinson scored 20 points and Phoenix held Golden State to an NBA record-tying six points in the fourth quarter to win 102-89.

After trailing by 15 with 5 1/2 minutes left in the third quarter and by seven entering the fourth, the Suns held Golden State to the lowest-scoring quarter in team history.

A field goal by Tony Delk with 3.5 seconds to play allowed Golden State to match the NBA record-low of six points in the fourth quarter set by Detroit at Orlando on Dec. 7, 1993.

Jason Kidd had 17 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds for the Suns. Tom Gugliotta added 20 points for Phoenix but only five in the second half.

In Toronto, Randy Brown made a 19-footer as the buzzer sounded in overtime to give Chicago its first two-game winning streak of the season 90-88.

Brown finished with 17 points and nine rebounds.

Brent Barry, who replaced the injured Mark Bryant in the starting lineup, led Chicago with 19 points. Toni Kukoc had 18 points, nine assists, and six rebounds — and Dickey Simpkins added 17 points and 10 rebounds off the bench.

Kevin Willis led the Raptors with 19 points.

In Denver, Antonio McDyess had career-highs of 46 points and 19 rebounds and Denver got two 3-pointers by Chauncey Billups in the last minute to hold off Vancouver.

McDyess was 16-for-25 from the field and 14-for-18 on free throws as he became the first member of the Nuggets to score 40 or more points since Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf had 50 on Dec. 7, 1995 at Utah.

Billups, who had six points in the first 47 minutes of play, sank a 3-point shot with a minute left to break a 110-110 tie and a second with 9 seconds remaining to give the Nuggets a 116-112 lead.

Reserve Tony Massenburg had 27 points and seven rebounds and Shareef Abdul-Rahim added 18 for Vancouver, which lost for the sixth time in seven games.

Lazio set course for title; Real Madrid lose

PARIS (AFP) — Lazio installed themselves as Italy's championship favourites on Sunday after a 90th minute goal saw them beat Vicenza 2-1 to go four points clear at the top.

It was a remarkable feat as Lazio had just missed a penalty, seen another goal disallowed and had midfielder Dejan Stankovic sent off.

But fellow Yugoslav Sinisa Mihajlovic blasted one of his trademark free-kicks through a crowded goalmouth at the very end to secure a victory which could prove decisive in the weeks ahead.

Lazio's victory was particularly precious as title rivals Fiorentina could only scrape a 1-1 draw at Salernitana, who missed a 66th minute penalty.

AC Milan slipped to fourth slot (43pts) after their 1-0 defeat to AS Roma on Saturday afternoon.

Sampdoria, meanwhile, continued their campaign to beat the drop with a 1-0 victory over Empoli on Sunday. Midfielder Fabio Picchia secured the team's second consecutive win with a goal in the 33rd minute.

Venezia also clocked up a 1-0 victory,

with Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba converting an 83rd minute penalty against Udinese.

An injury-time goal from Real Betis midfielder Ito sent Real Madrid crashing to their third successive league defeat at the weekend. They were beaten 3-2 and made new coach John Toshack's return to the club a miserable one.

The only thing to cheer Real was news that their old rivals Barcelona had slipped to a 4-2 defeat at home in their top-of-the-table clash against Valencia — their third loss to Valencia in ten days after defeats in both legs of their Spanish Cup clash.

The defeat leaves Barcelona just two points clear of Mallorca who drew 1-1 with bottom side Tenerife.

Toulouse continued their recent revival under new/old coach Alain Giresse by gaining a 1-1 draw at Bastia while champions Lens boosted their slender chances of Europe with a 2-1 win at Auxerre.

Giresse has yet to taste defeat since starting his second spell at Toulouse, who were odds on for relegation when

he arrived exactly a month ago.

A week ago the strugglers upset title hopefuls Marseille and Andrade Cruz Oceano bagged a point after Liberian striker Daye Prince had opened the scoring on the hour.

Giresse took Toulouse to promotion two seasons ago before answering the call to coach Paris saint Germain last summer. But he lasted only three months before being sacked.

In Germany Hansa Rostock were able to hold Bayern Munich for more than an hour but then the floodgates opened and Bayern scored a 4-0 win to extend their lead over the rest of the competition to 12 points.

Goals were scarce commodities in the Bundesliga with only seven in six games — and Bayern Munich scored more than half of them in a late flurry.

Borussia Dortmund defeated FC Nuremberg 3-0 while all the day's other games — Freiburg versus VfL Wolfsburg, Hamburg versus Bayer Leverkusen, Eintracht Frankfurt versus Borussia Munchengladbach and 1860 Munich versus Duisburg — ended in tame 0-0 draws.

U.S. athletics finals bring more questions than answers

ATLANTA (AFP) — American athletes produced more questions than answers when it came to setting the stage for the World Indoor Athletics Championships that open Thursday in Maebashi, Japan.

Upstarts ruled here at the United States Indoor Championships, the American qualifying event for the world finals, with several favourites having much to prove next weekend.

How can Maurice Greene, who flirted with his world record in the U.S. 60-metre semi-finals, be favoured for a world crown when he could not win the U.S. title, which went to childhood rival Tim Harden in 6.44 seconds?

"He has had a good season," U.S. world coach Russ Rogers said. "A stumble here isn't going to shake him up much."

How can Kevin Little, the reigning world indoor champion at 200m, expect to defend when he was whipped for the U.S. crown by Rohsaan Griffin, a training partner of 100m world-record holder Donovan Bailey of Canada?

His triumph was so unlikely that USA track and field chief executive officer Craig Mashback

said of Griffin, "I don't even know who that is."

Griffin set an American record of 20.32 seconds in only his third race since switching to coach Dan Pfaff from ex-trainer Pat Henry.

"I scared myself," Griffin said. "I wasn't intending on breaking a record. This definitely gives me a lot of confidence going into worlds. I can run much faster."

"I'm happy that I won. But I'm sad that I had to switch coaches to get here. Pat did a lot for me. Dan is doing a lot for me. So my emotions are mixed."

Why should Olympic and reigning indoor champion Charles Austin expect to defend when he was only third in the U.S. final, advancing only because he alone among Americans met his event's qualifying standard?

And who knows what to expect from 1996 Olympic silver medalist John Godina, unbeaten in the shot put last year but third here and going only to Japan only because rival C.J. Hunter strained a shoulder on his final toss?

Gail Devers gave us leaders reason for hope. The two-time reigning Olympic 100m champion and reigning world

indoor champion won her third crown in seven days, winning in a season-best 6.98 seconds in France before clocking top times of 7.02 in Sweden and here.

She ran here on barely an hour's sleep but served notice that she can handle even the jet lag from flying more than halfway around the world in a few days.

Angelo Taylor, a local college junior, won the

U.S. 400 title in 45.50 and began looking ahead not to Japan, but to the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

"This definitely helps me get ready for the 2000 Olympics, running against big time athletes," Taylor said. "I wish (reigning Olympic champion) Michael Johnson was here. I want to run against him. That's how I'm going to get better, going against the best."

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Israeli prosecutors revive bid to extradite U.S. murder suspect

TEL AVIV (AFP) — State prosecutors have decided to appeal a supreme court ruling barring the extradition of a Jewish-American teenager wanted for murder in the United States, a justice ministry official said on Monday.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP that prosecutors would challenge the high court decision that Samuel Sheinbein, 18, could not be sent back to the United States for trial because he holds Israeli citizenship by birth.

Under Israeli law a supreme court ruling can be appealed to an expanded panel of high court justices.

On Thursday, a five-member panel split three-to-two

in deciding that Sheinbein was protected from extradition even though he had never been to Israel before fleeing here in September 1997 after police discovered the murder of a 19-year-old acquaintance, Alfredo Tello.

The ruling sparked protests from both U.S. officials and the family of the murder victim.

The official said prosecutors would base their appeal on the minority opinion, penned by Chief Justice Aharon Barak, that Sheinbein did not have sufficient links to Israel to merit rejecting the U.S. extradition request.

The earlier high court decision gave prosecutors until Monday to indict Sheinbein on murder charges so he

could face trial in Israel. But the state decided instead to demand a rehearing by a larger panel of justices.

"We felt that the minority decision was a more correct interpretation of the law and therefore we decided to appeal the ruling," the official said.

The state has 15 days from the original ruling to file its appeal and the official was unable to say exactly when the request would be lodged.

U.S. officials expressed open frustration with last week's high court ruling and Attorney General Janet Reno hinted that Washington would seek a review of that decision.

"We are looking at whatever we can do in terms of further steps to be taken in

the review process," she said.

But the Israeli official rejected any suggestion that U.S. pressure played a role in the decision to appeal the Sheinbein ruling.

"U.S. pressure had nothing to do with it, this is an issue of interpreting Israeli law," he said.

The earlier supreme court ruling prompted calls in Israel for changes to the extradition and citizenship laws so that the country does not become a haven for criminals.

Legislation is already before parliament which would permit the extradition of non-resident Israeli citizens on condition that if convicted they could serve their prison sentences in Israel.



A GOOD LUCK HUG: A boy hugs a leg of statue of a white elephant in Kunming, in the Yunnan province of China, along the 4,060-kilometre border Yunnan shares with its neighbouring countries, such as Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. The culture of Yunnan has been greatly affected by those countries. The elephant is also a symbol of good luck in southeast Asia (AP photo)

Detainees in PNA jails end 36-day hunger strike

NABLUS (AP) — Several dozen supporters of the Islamist group Hamas have ended a 36-day fast aimed at winning their release from a Palestinian jail, their spokesman said Monday.

For 18 days, the 48 detainees at Jneid prison in the West Bank town of Nablus drank only water, but then began consuming a little bit of milk to avoid endangering their health.

The decision to end the fast came after the detainees reached an understanding with the Palestinian National Authority that their cases would be reviewed, said the inmates' spokesman, Sheikh Jamal Mansour.

Col. Mohammad Jabareen, head of the Jneid prison, said the review of some of the files had already begun.

The 48 are among about 400 detainees in Palestinian jails who are being held without charges or trial, according to Palestinian human rights groups.

Hamas has carried out scores of attacks on Israeli, including more than a dozen suicide bombings, in hopes of wrecking the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy agreements.

U.S. diplomat says military will topple Saddam

ANKARA (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein will be toppled through a military coup, said a U.S. diplomat who was recently named Washington's special representative for transition in Iraq.

"Most probably, there will be a military coup [in Iraq]... All I can say is that it will be very sudden and without warning," said Frank Ricciardone, the number two at the U.S. embassy in Ankara, in an

interview with the daily Milliyet newspaper published Monday.

Ricciardone, who quit Ankara on Monday to take up the new job, said that his mission was not only to see Saddam toppled, but to "help the Iraqi people in transforming Iraq into a country at peace with its neighbours."

"Can we turn our eyes away from a country where murders take place and people suffer?" the U.S. diplo-

mat said when asked about interference in the internal affairs of Iraq.

Ricciardone added that Washington did not have any candidates to replace Saddam if he were overthrown. "The United States does not have a candidate... A military regime will be in power for some time after the coup," he told Milliyet.

The U.S. diplomat denied that Washington's intervention would lead to the break up of its southern neigh-

bour. "The chances that Iraq will be divided are almost zero... Of course, there will be a struggle for power for some time. But it is much more risky not to do anything," he said.

Ankara has expressed reservation about the U.S. plan to destabilise Saddam on the grounds that it could lead to an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq that would in turn spur separatist Kurdish rebels fighting against Ankara.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tribal guerrillas kill eight in India

GUWAHATI (AFP) — Eight Muslim villagers were killed by tribal guerrillas in the northeastern Indian state of Assam on Monday, police said. Guerrillas from the Bodo tribal community opened fire at a group of Muslim villagers in the Dhubri district of the state, 300 km west of the capital of Guwahati, a police spokesman said. "The group had 16 Muslims. Five villagers were killed on the spot, while three others died at a hospital and another three are missing," the spokesman added. He said authorities immediately deployed more police in the troubled district. Bodos have been campaigning for a homeland in oil-rich Assam. They massacred about 200 Muslims over three months in 1994-95, forcing thousands to flee their homes.

Toads force cars off British road

LONDON (R) — Amorous toads and their human allies have forced cars off a country road in eastern England for the month of March. Nottinghamshire county council said in local newspaper advertisements that it had closed a one-mile stretch of Bean Ford Lane in the village of Oxtun to help the creatures cross to their breeding grounds in nearby ponds and lakes. "The prohibition is required in connection with herpetile migration," the ads said. Campaigners for the local wildlife trust paid the council 700 pounds (\$1,123) towards the administrative costs of the ban. Their leader, Margaret Cooper, told the Daily Telegraph that in past years a third of the loads perished beneath vehicle tyres despite her efforts to persuade drivers to slow down.

Turkey grenade attack wounds 17

ISTANBUL (R) — Unknown attackers threw a hand grenade into an Istanbul coffeehouse late on Sunday, wounding 17 people, Anadolu news agency said. The attack in the Esenler district was the most serious of a number in the city that evening. There was no clear indication who was responsible or whether the events were connected. "Traitors are at work," the agency quoted Istanbul Governor Erol Cakir as saying after visiting some of the injured in local hospitals. He did not elaborate.

Tehran facing water shortage

TEHRAN (AFP) — Tehran is in danger of an acute water shortage following an especially dry winter that has left reserves 50 per cent below last year's supply, the official IRNA news agency reported Monday. Mohsen Nuriman, chief water official for Tehran province, told IRNA that a "crisis committee" had been formed to address the situation, which was caused by a shortage of rain and snow during the winter months.

Israeli navy fires on fishermen

TYRE (AFP) — An Israeli naval gunboat opened fire without warning on Monday on Lebanese fishing boats off the coast of the southern port city of Tyre, police said. No casualties were reported. A small boat with three fishermen on board was hit by several bullets when the Israeli gunboat opened fire with heavy machineguns, police said. The fishermen escaped unharmed and returned safely to the port of Tyre.

Iranians arrested over abortion clinic

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian police have arrested three doctors and two midwives for running an illegal abortion clinic in a disused and ruined hospital, the government daily Iran reported Monday. The arrests followed the death of a woman during an abortion the doctors performed at their backstreet clinic, the paper said. The five medical staff were charged with "deliberate termination of pregnancy leading to the death of both mother and baby," the paper said.

Yemen jails six for bombing attacks

ADEN (R) — A Yemeni court on Monday sentenced six Yemenis to prison terms ranging from two to four years for a string of bombings in the southern port of Aden. Witnesses said the court also ordered the confiscation of \$120,000 which was found on one of the suspects when he was arrested. The trial of the six men, aged between 17 and 29, began in November. They were charged with carrying out five bombing attacks in July 1997.

Algeria violence kills 11; politicians press on to poll

ALGIERS (AFP) — Armed Islamists killed 11 Algerian village guards and a soldier in incidents near Medea and Dellys south of the capital, newspapers said here Monday.

The reports came a day after 11 candidates managed to raise enough support to stand in a presidential election poll due in April and submit their files to the constitutional council, according to political sources.

The attacks kidnapped 10 inhabitants of the village of Derrague, 80 kilometres south of Algiers. Dozens of other residents were wounded in the violence late Thursday, the daily Al Yawm newspaper said.

Officials failed to confirm the report.

Algeria has been wracked by bloodletting in the civil war between Islamists and the security forces, in which foreign observers estimate that scores of thousands of civilians have died since early 1992.

Last September, army-backed head of state Liamine Zeroul, himself a military man, nevertheless announced plans to go ahead with a presidential election next month, in which he would not stand.

In recent weeks, 48 political figures have sought to meet legal conditions required to take part in the polls, which included getting backing from 75,000 signatories in 25 of the country's administrative departments.

This activity took place against a backdrop of a relative lull in the violence, which initially began with the January 1992 cancellation of the second round of general elections the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

The FIS was banned in 1992, after the violence erupted. Sources said those in this year's race included socialist forces from head Hocine Ait Ahmed, Algerian renewal party chairman Noureddine Boulkrouh, former Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflique and Islamist leader Abdullah Djabbah.

Ex-Prime Ministers Sid Ahmed Ghozali, Mouloud Hamrouche and Mokdad Sifi were also standing, with another former government minister, Ahmad Taleh Ibrahim.

The clashes at Derrague occurred when the village guards tried to stop attackers from stealing animals and money from farmers. Al Yawm reported.

On Saturday afternoon, a soldier and a village guard were killed when a bomb went off in Dellys, a port town 100 kilometres east of Algiers, the daily Liberte reported.

Another soldier was injured in the blast, which took place as a detachment of security forces was passing, the paper added. Most local self-defence units, which are backed by the Algerian government in their efforts to defend village communities, are not heavily armed, but the Islamists often use powerful automatic weapons.

In view of the situation, candidates for the presidential election due on April 15 had to pledge before the constitutional council that they would not use Islam or the Arabic and Berber languages for party purposes, to respect political pluralism and to reject and denounce violence as a means of political action and expression.

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Border fighting continues in Horn of Africa as talks get under way

ADDIS ABABA, ASMARA (AFP) — Eritrean and Ethiopian troops fought over their border on Monday, Asmara reported, as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) urged a ceasefire and announced talks with both sides.

The ceasefire call came after Asmara's sudden, unexpected acceptance on Saturday of a three-month-old peace plan demanding that Eritrean forces withdraw from the Western Badme region they occupied in May last year when the fighting first flared.

Ethiopia on Sunday declared "total victory" on the front, which saw infantry on a vast, stony plain advancing in the teeth of artillery guns, tanks and heavy machine-guns dug in on surrounding hills, aerial dog-fights, and Ethiopian aircraft

making strafing raids, according to reports from both sides.

Diplomats and government sources in Addis Ababa said Eritrea had accepted the peace plan because Ethiopian troops had reoccupied the entire region, and were "mopping up" and extending Ethiopian control beyond the area envisaged in the plan.

Observers said the nature of the fighting made it certain that casualty figures had been huge. Each side claimed to have killed thousands of the enemy and both sides were keeping foreign journalists away from the frontlines.

Some in Asmara who attempted a sortie without official authorisation or the usual guides drove overnight on Saturday to the Badme region and got close enough to hear a few artillery guns firing.

But Eritrean troops confiscated the photographers' cameras before they had the chance to take pictures and returned the journalists — politely but firmly — to Asmara, where they were able to watch television footage of the fighting filmed by state media.

In Addis Ababa, Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim told a press conference that a delegation would travel to Asmara after talks Monday with Ethiopian officials.

An earlier statement called for an immediate ceasefire, which is the first stage of the plan proposed in November, accepted immediately by Ethiopia, and now by Eritrea.

Subsequent steps are demilitarisation of the 1,000-kilometre border, the deployment of international peacekeepers and observers, and neutral delin-

eation of the contested frontier, where fighting started in May last year and lasted for about five weeks before resuming on Feb. 6.

"We are going to meet the Ethiopian government today [Monday] and then we are going to Asmara," Salim said.

"The major preoccupation is how to put an end to the war and to prevent further loss of lives. The real challenge now is to put an end to the current hostilities and to implement the framework-agreement."

The OAU's principal mediation committee comprises representatives of Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe and Djibouti, but Eritrea and Djibouti broke diplomatic ties last November after Eritrea accused the tiny Red Sea nation, which borders both countries, of allowing Ethiopia to use its territory.

Turkish PM announces southeast economic package

ANKARA (R) — Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit on Monday announced an economic package focused on Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast, following the capture of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Resources totalling 40.5 trillion lira (\$11.4 million) would be set aside for the development programme over the next few years in the latest in a series of such packages.

Previous programmes have failed to improve substantially the economic health of Turkey's backward southeast, ravaged by

more than a decade of guerrilla conflict.

Ecevit told a news conference the state would this year inject 10 trillion lira into an investment promotion fund. A further 20 trillion lira would go into the fund next year and the remaining finances would go to other projects.

The southeast is the scene of a 14-year-old conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Ecevit said the package had no connection with the seizure of

Ocalan, who is facing treason charges carrying the death penalty after being captured by Turkish special forces in Kenya last month.

The investment incentives would provide employment for around 8,200 people, the prime minister said. He said the plan, covering 26 Turkish provinces, would cover both investment and energy incentives.

"Signatures are being sought for a cabinet decision on providing energy support for companies in the eastern and southeastern Anatolian regions," Ecevit

told reporters of the plan to subsidise energy costs to companies.

A project had also begun to accelerate infrastructure investment, boosting education and health facilities as part of efforts to encourage a return to the hundreds of villages emptied during the guerrilla conflict.

Activities such as carpet making, livestock farming and bee-keeping would be promoted in order to attract families back to their villages. The measures were designed to return around 1,000 families to rural life.

Ocalan's 'confessions' make daily front-page news in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, held on a Turkish prison island, may be one of the world's closest-guarded prisoners but his alleged "confessions" make the front page every day in Turkey.

Ocalan, snatched by Turkish agents in Kenya last month and facing trial on treason and terrorism charges, was interrogated by prosecutors of Ankara's state security court for two days after his capture.

He then had a brief meeting Thursday with two lawyers in the presence of a magistrate and masked soldiers, his defence said. Despite the supposed secrecy of the preparation of the case, his "confessions" — leaked by anonymous sources — have swamped the front pages of Turkey's press.

They range from lists of countries

which allegedly supported his separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) to celebrities said to have links with the rebels, who have waged a 15-year struggle for an independent Kurdish homeland in the southeast of the country.

The mass-circulation daily Hurriyet questioned whether "the officials behind the leaks are aware of the legal right to confidentiality," while at the same time itself running major articles on the rebel leader's "confessions." But the paper has, however warned, that the leaks might be part of a "misinformation" campaign.

The media have not forgotten the so-called confessions of Ocalan's top lieutenant, Semdin Sakik, who was captured by the army in northern Iraq last year. Although these appeared in the

press, they were later denied when he appeared in court.

Sakik was for example said to have exposed links between the PKK and Akin Birdal, the head of a Turkish human rights group. Birdal later narrowly escaped an attempt on his life.

This time round, leaks from the Imrali prison island have named the singer Ibrahim Tatlis, an idol on the Kurdish music scene, who was forced to deny he had given money to the PKK and to declare that he "had no problem with the state."

The leaks have also fuelled speculation about a PKK link to the 1986 murder of Swedish Premier Olof Palme. As well as stoking up Turkish suspicions that Greece has backed the PKK, Ocalan's alleged prison admissions have named Syria, Iran, South Africa,

the Czech Republic, Serbia, Romania and Germany among his movement's alleged supporters.

The prosecutor at Turkey's appeals court, who is seeking the closing down of the pro-Kurdish Hadeep Party and its exclusion from municipal elections on April 18, seized upon Ocalan's supposed claim that Hadeep took orders from the PKK.

Ocalan is also said to have denounced the PKK for trafficking drugs, although in other reports he is said to have denied this. One of Ocalan's lawyers, Ahmet Okcuoglu, is reported to have suspicions that his client was being kept drugged, although other reports claim the lawyer said Ocalan was "in good health."

In Greece, the daily Eleftherotypia published Monday an interview that

the then-fugitive Ocalan made on Dec. 28, in which he said he was "not afraid of death" but was more worried about "a political or spiritual annihilation."

In that interview, he said Turkish leaders "have no plans... to solve the Kurdish problem, just as they give no thought to resolving the Cyprus situation — a reference to the Mediterranean island's division."

Meanwhile, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg opened a hearing Monday into Turkey's alleged suppression of Kurdish freedom of expression, as well as the torture and killing of Kurdish citizens.

Ocalan's case was cited in this respect. One lawyer said the court's decisions would be "historic," and that Ocalan's trial in Turkey would be a test of the "entire Turkish legal system."

White House press corps stuck in Utah